

Autumn is the best season for a driving holiday, either in the countryside around Beijing or further afield. **Page 16**



Mongolian fare — delicious and simple to cook. **Page 14**



"They always look at us scornfully, but our work is also great. Without us, they couldn't live in their new houses." **Page 9**



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Golden Opportunities

Olympic marketing plan encourages business to share Beijing 2008 pie

By Xiao Rong

The official marketing plan for the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games, a five-year calendar of opportunities for Chinese and international enterprises, was unveiled Monday during a ceremony at the Beijing Hotel.

Each holding a golden key, International Olympic Committee (IOC) president Jacques Rogge and Liu Qi, president of the Beijing Organizing Committee for the Games of the XXIX Olympiad (BOCOG), together unlocked a door symbolizing the marketing potential of the Beijing Games.

"It's a great moment for China," said Rogge to the over 600 business leaders, officials and potential sponsors attending the ceremony. "We launch the marketing program in a country of over 1.3 billion inhabitants. We are literally and symbolically opening the door to the future."

"We expect the marketing partnership between the business community and the Olympic movement to reach new heights and generate a new level of benefits," IOC marketing commission chairman Gerhard Heiberg said at the ceremony and urged the business community to take an active part in the Olympic sponsorship.

Apart from the Olympic Partner program (TOP) initiated by the IOC, which has already attracted nine global partners, the Beijing Games sponsorship program consists of three tiers of support, namely Beijing 2008 Partner, Beijing 2008 Sponsor and Beijing 2008 Supplier.

The different levels of sponsorship will give different exclusive marketing rights within each category, based on specific types of contributions, according to Yuan Bin, vice director of the BOCOG marketing department.

"For each tier, there is a respective price benchmark. Possible price variations will be allowed to reflect specific industry conditions and competitions," she explained at Monday's ceremony. "But both Chinese companies and foreign invested companies here will have equal rights to compete for the sponsorship."

BOCOG will also manage licensing programs that will authorize companies to produce and sell products with the official Olympic logo after they pay royalties.

Starting from the fourth

quarter of this year, the Beijing Games partner and sponsor program will offer corporations four years of marketing rights. The licensing program will begin in late 2003 for the national part while the international part will start after the Athens 2004 Olympic Games.

As a partner of the Chinese Olympic Committee since 1992, Li Ning Sports expressed enthusiasm towards sponsoring the Beijing Games.

"The Olympic Games is a process of educating and motivating companies for their brand building. I think Chinese companies should take full advantage of the business opportunities provided by the Beijing Games to improve our global competitiveness," said company president Li Ning at Monday's launch ceremony.

When asked what advice he could offer to Chinese companies eyeing the Olympic market, Peter Franklin, director of Global Sports Partnerships of Coca-Cola, one of the nine TOP sponsors of the Beijing Games, suggested interested corporations find a specific connection between their business objective and the Olympic brand.

"We recommend that the companies look at their business objectives and understand how the Olympics can help their business," Franklin said in an interview with *Beijing Today* Monday.

Another TOP partner for the Beijing Games, Kodak also told *Beijing Today* that the key was for Chinese enterprises to utilize the Olympic platform to showcase their technologies, products and services.

"This is the biggest stage, so companies must make sure they are doing it right. It's more than just the short-term marketing promotion opportunities. Companies must have a clear positioning before getting involved," said Christopher Adams, chief representative for Kodak (China).

Through their long-term sponsorship with the Olympic Games, both Coca-Cola and Kodak have gained substantial benefits in terms of sales, brand building, customer relations and employee loyalty. The two giants also said they share a common confidence in the great potential of the growing China market.

"We want to see China succeed, for we see ourselves not just as a global company, but as a Chinese corporate citizen," said Adams.



Liu Qi and Jacques Rogge jointly launch the Beijing Games marketing plan at the Beijing Hotel, September 1.

Xinhua Photo

In the wake of the launch of the Beijing Games marketing plan, *Beijing Today* conducted an exclusive interview with Wei Jizhong, executive member of BOCOG and chairman of China Sports Industry.

Beijing Today: What is your general comment on the newly launched Beijing Games marketing plan? What is the new characteristic of the plan compared with the marketing plans of past Games?

Wei Jizhong: In my opinion, the plan has four key attributes: First, by fully considering the interests of different parties concerning the staging of the Games, the plan is more consistent and harmonious.

Second, the protection of intellectual property rights is highlighted in the plan. Thirdly, the plan aims at stimulating Chinese enterprises to achieve a wider participation in the Games.

Fourthly, the plan is launched in a more open and transparent way, with interested corporations

having the chance to communicate directly with the IOC and BOCOG.

Beijing Today: BOCOG president Liu Qi has said that the Beijing Games marketing plan will be practiced mainly in a market-oriented way, while at the same time under a planned economy system. So how can BOCOG guarantee fairness and openness while minimizing administrative interference in seeking sponsors?

Wei: There should be a general plan concerning different tiers of sponsors and their respective qualifications and price benchmarks. Also the rights and benefits of sponsors need the macro-control of the organizing committee.

As for the implementation of the marketing plan, a market oriented system is necessary. In this sense, BOCOG must abide by international standards to ensure an open, transparent and equal way of seeking partners. So the use of both market-oriented and planned economy mechanisms are not contradictory.

Beijing Today: What do you think are the unique advantages of Chinese local enterprises when competing with global enterprises for domestic sponsorship?

Wei: Back in 1995, when I was the secretary general of the Chinese Olympic Committee, we entrusted Zhong Ao Company in Tianjin to purchase the exclusive licensing rights of the Atlanta Games in the Chinese mainland. Then we transferred the licensing rights to some domestic enterprises like Yi Li Group. It proved to be a success concerning the brand building and market share increase of Yi Li Group.

Therefore I view the advantages of Chinese local enterprises in competing for the sponsorship rights in this way: First, most Chinese enterprises have a bigger market share in China market. Second, local consumers tend to be more closely connected with domestic corporations. And thirdly, domestic enterprises usually boast wider

and steadier sales networks nationwide.

Beijing Today: What sort of surplus do you predict for the Beijing Games after the official launch of the marketing plan?

Wei: According to the estimated budget of the Beijing Games when Beijing was applying for hosting the Games in 2001, there was to be a \$16 million surplus. After taking recent events into consideration, our security expenses might now increase substantially, though earnings from the IOC have also increased.

Still I'm quite optimistic that by minimizing operational costs and ensuring quality, the Beijing Games can still be profitable.

What I should stress, however, is that we must avoid the possible overheating of the Olympic economy, which might lead to the over-commercialization of the Games. The returns of investment on the Olympic project can only be seen after 2004, so overlapping Olympic-related investments must be avoided

Sick Marcher Stumbles on Luxury Gap



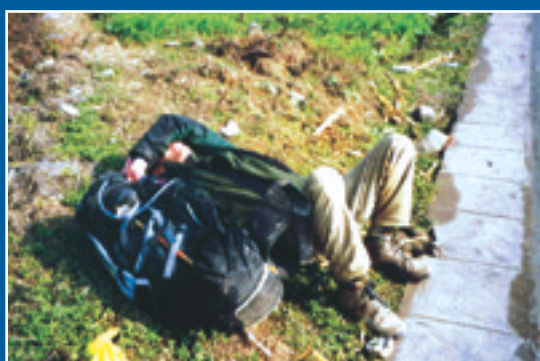
By Andrew McEwen/Ed Jocelyn
When Dr. Lu at the Xiehe Hospital told him to quit the march and rest up for six months, Andy knew exactly how to respond.

"Thanks, doc," he said, and promptly booked the first flight out of Beijing back to Sichuan.

Arriving at Luding Bridge on August 6, Andy explained the obscure reasoning behind his sudden return.

"Have you ever tried saying you 'work in movies' to women at parties?" said Ed. "Works for me..."

Leaving the New Long March



Ed Jocelyn relaxes by the road to Luding Bridge.



Andy McEwen suffers with friends back in Beijing.

on July 4 was almost a routine decision for Andy. After 4,000 kilometers of carrying the same mystery stomach ailment, he simply couldn't walk any further and Ed couldn't wait any longer. It was simple really — a bus, a taxi, a plane, a taxi and home to an air-conditioned Beijing apartment.

He brooded in bed for the best part of the first week, pausing only for occasional trips to the hospital. A long tube jammed down his throat identified the complaint as "chronic gastritis and oesophagitis." The cause? Uncertain. The cure? Uncertain.

Only one thing was certain — rest

was essential to recovery.

Meanwhile in south Sichuan, Ed and substitute marcher Kevin Yang charged north towards the historic bridge. The duo made a series of cheery "miss you" phone calls back to Beijing base camp.

Andy scowled. "I'm not supposed to be here," he muttered to himself, supping on some tomato soup and then crunching down on a wholemeal baguette.

Wait a minute, wholemeal?

Baguette?

Real soup?

"Hmmm...you know," he said. "Actually this is pretty sweet."

He flicked on the Terminator 3 DVD and flipped through some press clippings all about himself and how great he was. A friend called up to ask her "hero" how he was doing. "You're so brave," she said. Well, yes, I guess...

Time on his hands, Andy explored his favorite city. The only food better than falafel and hummous at 1,001 Nights is maybe tarka dahl with rassam soup at Mirch Masala. And the only thing better than that is a home-made Mexican bean burrito with dabs of low-fat sour cream.

(Continued on page 2)

New Law Curbs Red Stamp Power

By Xiao Rong

A new law on administrative licensing aiming at restricting the misuse of government power was approved last Wednesday by the National People's Congress, China's top legislature.

The law, which covers the government's right to grant franchises, permits or certificates to businesses and individuals, "will facilitate the reform of administrative licensing and help curb corruption

resulting from excessive government powers," said Li Fei, vice director of the legal affairs office of the NPC Standing Committee, at last Friday's press conference.

Under the new law, which will take effect from July 1, 2004, ministries under the State Council will no longer have the right to empower themselves with franchising rights, and fee collection practices will be abandoned.

"Government bodies are enthusiastic about expanding their power because they can collect fees from those who want the franchises or permits, and this is a major source of government corruption," said Professor Ying Songnian, from the National Administrative School and also one of the drafters of the law.

He commented that the law will have an unprecedented impact on the relations between

government bodies and common citizens, in that the new law highlights higher efficiency and convenience for ordinary people.

The law simplifies the procedures for granting administrative licenses and abolishes unnecessary restrictions against applicants. It stipulates that applicants will be required to go to far fewer government departments for administrative approval.

Many Chinese have had the

experience of having to go to dozens of government departments to obtain official red stamps. It sometimes takes years to get all the stamps required to set up a new business.

So far, commissions and ministries of the State Council have given up rights to administer 1,195 franchise rights, and handed 82 items to industrial associations and other intermediate agencies since 2002.

Guidelines for Preventing SARS Recurrence

By Dong Nan

The Ministry of Health launched a national campaign last Friday aimed at preventing a recurrence of the SARS epidemic, which is feared may break out again this autumn or winter, and issued nationwide anti-SARS guidelines for the country's health system.

Those guidelines include seven sections including work aims, case diagnosis and reporting, prevention and control,

medical treatment, alerts and emergency aid, and examination of the effectiveness of supervision and management procedures.

Meanwhile, to ensure that any possible SARS cases are identified and reported as quickly as possible, the ministry also issued a special program of surveillance, reporting, information exchange and communication on SARS.

A national drill on how to

deal with an outbreak of SARS will be held before September 30 to ensure that the various departments and regions coordinate, communicate and cooperate smoothly, according to the new guidelines.

The guidelines stipulate that a group of experts must get to any place where a suspected SARS case is found within 24 hours, to determine whether it is, in fact, SARS.

Those guidelines list Beijing,

Tianjin, Shanghai and Guangzhou as major regions for SARS prevention work, because of their large floating populations. Special attention also should be given to doctors and nurses, migrant farm workers, hospitals, schools, kindergartens, and construction sites.

The guidelines also separate SARS into three categories, according to degree of seriousness and the range of the disease.

The World Health Organization has also recently launched a document, similar to the guidelines, on alerting the public and verification of SARS cases.

The Beijing Anti-SARS United Working Group also released a similar document, which emphasizes the unified command system, epidemic reporting system, SARS prevention and control system and emergency treatment system.

China Reports Progress in Earthquake Monitoring

China's capacity to monitor and forecast earthquakes has continued to improve, according to a statement from the China Seismological Bureau released on here on Thursday.

According to the press release, earthquakes measuring above 4 on the Richter Scale can be monitored effectively.

Important provincial capitals in east China and neighboring areas have developed the capacity to monitor tremors of 1.5 to 2 on the Richter scale, while the national capital can monitor earthquakes at

1 to 1.5 on the Richter scale.

Over 400 state and province level professional seismological observatories, and 30 regional remote monitoring networks have been constructed across the country, supplemented by 1,400 smaller earthquake monitoring stations and 8,000 minor monitoring stations.

During the Ninth Five-Year Plan Period (1996-2000), the country's seismological observatories underwent upgrading for digital technology.

(Xinhua)

China Post Cuts Express Mail Charges

The China State Postal Bureau lowered charges for its domestic express mail service by an average of 10 percent on August 30.

The move is the latest effort by the bureau to increase its competitiveness against increasing challenges posed by foreign rivals.

The billing unit for express mail has been changed from 200 to 500 grams. "Through the adjustment, the price for express mail will be reduced by an average of 10 percent. The price for mail heavier than 500 grams will even drop by 30 percent on average," said bureau spokesman Sui Hongwei.

The bureau has been charg-

ing 20 yuan (US \$2.4) for the first 200 grams and 6 yuan (72 US cents) for every additional 200 grams. Under the new pricing scheme, the price is 20 yuan for the first 500 grams.

The charge for every additional 500 grams varies according to how far away the destination is. Packages addressed to a destination less than 1,500 kilometers away are charged 6 yuan (72 US cents) for every additional 500 grams. For destinations between 1,500 and 2,500 kilometres, and more than 2,500 kilometres away, the charges are 9 yuan (US \$1.09) and 15 yuan (US \$1.81) respectively.

(Xinhua)

New Rules Address Personal Clearing Accounts

By Lu Junying

The Administrative Rules on Renminbi Bank Clearing Accounts, which took effect last Sunday, separate clearing functions from personal savings accounts.

Under the new regulation, savings accounts will only offer saving and withdrawal transactions. Individuals must open separate clearing accounts for settlement and clearing purposes.

Personal clearing accounts, which also allow for savings account functions such as deposits and cash withdrawals, and other functions including wage payments, payment of water, electricity, telephone and gas bills, the transfers of funds, will not increase costs for depositors, a bank spokesman told *China*

Daily on August 29.

Individual customers can use any bank they choose to either open a new clearing account or designate an existing account after September 1.

Card and passbook accounts with settlement functions will be treated as clearing accounts, but customers will need to confirm this in person. Personal clearing account also can be opened in other cities. The new regulation also establishes tighter controls over cross-account transfer of funds, largely by making a distinction between personal clearing accounts and corporate clearing accounts.

Business customers are required to open corporate clearing accounts.



Shanghai builds the first double track subway tunnel in China. When complete, the section will run 2,688 meters, from Huangxing Lüdi Station to Kailu Road Station.

Xinhua Photo

China, Canada Enhance Environmental Protection Cooperation

Chinese Vice-Premier Zeng Peiyan met Thursday with David Anderson, minister of environment of Canada, and his party.

Zeng said the Chinese government attaches great importance to ecological protection and construction, and with years of efforts, its capacity for sustainable development is increasing.

While accelerating economic development, China will go on adjusting its resources and industrial structures, reducing natural resources consumption and alleviating environmental pollution for the harmonious development of humans and nature, he said.

Zeng also thanked the Canadian govern-

ment for its fiscal support to China, hoping the two nations will further enhance their exchanges and cooperation in the environmental area.

Anderson said he is pleased at China's achievements in ecological protection and construction, and briefed Zeng on the two countries' environment cooperation projects.

The guests are in Beijing at the invitation of the State Environmental Protection Administration (SEPA). Prior to the meeting, Anderson and Xie Zhenhua, director of SEPA, re-signed a memorandum of understanding on China-Canada environmental cooperation.

(Xinhua)

Long Marchers (Continued from page 1)

Then there's all the art galleries, the gigs and girls, lots of girls. There are soups, breads, breakfast cereals and imported snacks.

Andy watched an entire five seasons of Friends, the second season of South Park and finished off with the first season of the Sopranos.

He gained five kilos. In two weeks.

Ed called again to cheer up his suffering partner.

"I haven't walked a single kilometer and haven't written a single meaningful word in two weeks," said Andy.

Standing in a squall halfway down a Sichuan mountain, Ed pretended not to hear.

"So when do the docs say you can be back on your feet?"

"Hmmm ... pretty soon, I guess," Andy replied.

"Good because you already spent the September budget at Starbuck's last week."

If leaving the New Long March was a raspberry frapucino, then returning is instant decaf. The next leg traverses the Snow Mountains and Grasslands in Sichuan, meaning a month of misery for the tiring twosome.

Andy suffers daily flash-

backs to his brief getaway in Beijing, recalling the kind of lifestyle lazy readers of this organ take for granted, but most people we meet on the New Long March never even dream of living.

"So how do you want your eggs?" asks the waitress with the impenetrable accent in Baoxing County Town this morning.

"Hard-boiled – for 15 minutes," says Andy.

Five minutes later, a watery bowl of molten egg effluence is brought to him.

Andy sighs, glances at his co-marcher.

"Shut up and drink your soup," says Ed.

Sixth High-tech Expo Set to Roll

By Xiao Rong

Seventy-six governmental and trade organizations from 26 countries and regions, as well as over 30 domestic provincial delegations have signed up for the sixth China Beijing International High-tech Expo, to be held between September 12 to 15.

The expo will cover exhibitions, trade talks, forums and exchange activities. The exhibition, with the China International Exhibition Hall as the main venue, will focus on the latest high-tech products and developments in the areas of Olympic construction projects, IT, biological and medical industry, environmental protection, manufacturing and infrastructure.

As one of the highlights of the expo, the New Beijing Key Bidding Projects Exhibition is also to be held at Haidian Exhibition Hall. Over 800 key construction projects will be on display, introducing to potential investors the city's preferential investment policies and environment.

The six trade talks, which introduce the key projects in the commercialization of high-tech, will recommend for the first time the public facilities and infrastructures projects.

Hotspot problems in the process of social and economic development like enterprise credit system, patents and standards, emergency networks and electronic commerce will be the new topics of the 22 forums and exchange activities.

Xuanwu Appoints Government CIOs

By Yu Shanshan

This Monday, 43 Chief Information Officers (CIOs) assumed office in 43 departments of the Xuanwu District government.

CIO is a title commonly given to the person in an enterprise responsible for information technology and computer systems that support enterprise goals.

The creation of the new positions is in accordance with a regulation passed recently by the Xuanwu government. According to the regulation, every administration department of the district government should appoint one CIO, who would be responsible for collecting, managing and explaining government information to the public.

The information referred to covers all information owned by those departments in their public service work, including district government annual reports, financial budgets and some long-term development plans and proposals.

Since Monday, people seeking such information from the Xuanwu government, have been able to visit the website www.bjxw.gov.cn, or dial the service hotline 6351 2345.

Legal Aid Firm Established in Beijing

By Yu Shanshan

China's first legal office providing free defense services was established in Beijing on August 25.

The Dongfang Legal Aid and Public Interest Litigation Law Firm, which also acts as an educational and public interest legal research center, was founded by legal experts from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS).

Already many people have contacted the firm seeking legal aid, according to Xiao Xianfu, director of the firm. The lawyers are still deciding which will be their first case. "We are waiting for a case that will make us famous overnight," Xiao told *Beijing Today* Monday.

Of those cases in which people seek help from Dongfang, those with a high level of public interest will receive priority, according to Xiao. "Behind one person, we see the problem of a larger group, regarding current rules, laws and systems," he said.

Xia Yong, director of the Law Institute of CASS, commented that, "The goal of public litigation is social reform through the power of law."

The legal firm, which is based at Shatan Beijie, is funded by the Ford Foundation, the CASS Law Institute and public donations.

Eight Chinese on Fortune's New Richest Under 40 List

By Dong Nan

Thirteen Asians, including eight Chinese, are ranked among the "40 richest people under the age of 40," according to a new list published by American business magazine Fortune last Wednesday.

The highest-ranking Chinese is Richard Li, Chairman of Hong Kong-based Pacific Century Group and son of Asia's richest man Li Ka-shing, who came in at No. 10 with a total worth

of \$1.6 billion.

Ding Lei, the president and founder of Ne-tease, is ranked No.14 and worth \$826 million.

The other Chinese named in the list include Liu Hanyuan, ranked No. 23 with a total worth of \$462 million, Wang Chuan-fu, BYD chairman, ranked No.30 with \$322 million, Guo Guangchang, chairman of the board of Fuxing Group and Fuxing Industrial, ranked No.32 with \$302 million, Huang

Guangyu, chairman of Pengrun Group, ranked No.33 with \$297 million, and Zhang Yong, chairman of Sichuan-based Lifeng Group, ranked No. 39.

The top slot is occupied by Russian oil baron Mikhail Khodorkovsky, worth an awesome \$8.3 billion. According to Fortune, people who inherited their wealth and are not working to expand their worth were excluded from the evaluation.

Goldman May Set Up Joint Venture Investment Bank

By Yu Shanshan

Goldman Sachs Group Inc. may form an investment bank in China in conjunction with ICEA Finance (Holdings) Ltd., to gain access to domestic stock sales in Asia's second-largest economy.

According to a report on Bloomberg.com on August 29, an insider who requested anonymity revealed that Goldman, the third-largest US securities firm judging by capital, may reach an agreement as early as next month with Fang Fenglei, chief executive of ICEA Finance (Holdings) Ltd., the investment bank arm of the Industrial & Commercial Bank of China. Fang was also a co-founder of China's biggest securities firm, China International Capital Corp (CICC), though he has left that firm.

So far, no contracts have been signed.

The insider added that Fang told the bank he plans to step down in September, but Goldman's spokesman in Hong Kong, Edward Naylor, and Fang himself both declined to comment.

Working with a Chinese partner would enable Goldman to be able to operate in the mainland's domestic underwriting business for the first time. Chinese companies sold \$7.8 billion of stocks on the domestic market last year and the government is striving to get citizens to redirect more of the \$1.3 trillion in private savings in Chinese banks into the stock market.

Goldman turned down a chance in the 1990s to work with Fang in forming China's first investment bank as an overseas partner. Instead, Morgan Stanley made the leap and now owns a 34 percent stake in the business, China International Capital Corp., which is controlled by China Construction Bank Ltd., the nation's third-largest lender. According to data from Bloomberg, China International sold \$2.8 billion of stocks in China last year, accounting for 36 percent of all sales nationwide.

In July, Goldman Chief Executive Officer Henry Paulson came to China to announce the company's establishment of a bad-loan venture as part of Goldman's push to gain a firm foothold in the domestic market.



"The agreement with US is an important milestone for Air China." — Air China President Li Jiaxiang

Photo by photocom

Air China, United Airlines Establish Market Alliance

Air China and United Airlines (UA) announced a plan last Thursday to form a marketing alliance and fly under each other's banners to expand services in both China and the United States.

The agreement, to take effect October 31, will include code-sharing and frequent flier program cooperation. According to the plan, UA will extend its current services to Beijing and Shanghai by putting passengers on Air China flights to five other Chinese cities. Air China will add its banner to United flights serving 14 US cities.

"Air China aims to become one of the world's

major airlines. To cooperate with world-class airlines such as United is a key component of Air China's globalization strategy. The agreement with UA is an important milestone for Air China," said Li Jiaxiang, president of China's national carrier.

UA CEO Glenn F. Tilton said, "The agreement will provide more convenience for passengers and satisfy needs of the customers of both companies. China's aviation market has developed rapidly. The cooperation between UA and Air China will help us to explore China's market better."

(Xinhua)

Australia Promotes Agricultural Exchange

By Zhao Hongyi

Australian Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Warren Truss is at the lead of a delegation of Australian entrepreneurs visiting Beijing this week to attend the China-Australia Agricultural Innovation Forum yesterday and today at the Asian Hotel.

At a press conference held for the opening of the forum yesterday, Truss's Chinese counterpart, Du Qinglin, emphasized the importance of technology transfers and cooperation under WTO multilateral negotiations over mere sales transactions, and set new priority areas for development of animal husbandry and veterinary sciences, agricultural science and technology and agri-product safety.

Over 150 business leaders and officials from both countries are attending the forum, the main topic of which is how to boost agricultural trade and increase productivity through research and development.

According to Truss, Chinese President Hu Jintao is scheduled to visit Australia later this year following Premier John Howard's trip to Beijing in August. The two leaders are expected to sign a free trade pact during Hu's stay.

Earlier this week, before they came to Beijing, the Australian delegation paid a visit to Shanghai.

First Foreign-Dominated Hydroplant in the Works

By Sun Ling

Construction of the Jinghong Power Station in Yunnan Province, the first large hydropower station in China to have a foreign dominant share holder, is due to start by the end of this year.

The Jinghong station will be one of eight power plants on the lower reaches of the Lancang River near Xishuangbanna, not far from China's borders with Myanmar, Laos and Thailand. Construction is slated to last over six years, after which most of the power generated will be exported to Southeast Asian countries.

According to plans, the station will have an annual generating capacity of seven billion kw/hours and receive a total investment of about 10 billion yuan.

Thailand's GMS Company holds a 70 percent stake in the project and the Chinese government the rest. Foreign capital has gone to power projects in this country since the late 1980s, but this will be the first time an overseas firm will be allowed to have a dominant stake in a domestic power plant.

Microsoft Quells Messenger Charge Rumors

By Wang Xiaoxiao

Recent reports in domestic newspapers that indicated Microsoft was preparing to charge Chinese customers fees for using its popular MSN Messenger instant messaging software were refuted this week by Microsoft China business department director Luo Chuan.

"These rumors arose due to misunderstandings about Microsoft's different commercial modes in China and the US. MSN messenger for personal computer users will always be free in China," he was quoted as stating in a *Shanghai Morning Post* article on Wednesday.

There are millions of Messenger users in China, at least in part because the program is bundled with Microsoft's dominant Windows software suite and is free to download.

In the US, Microsoft recently introduced new services under the MSN banner for users with broadband connections for which it will charge \$9.95 per month. Apparently, many Chinese users heard this news and assumed the company would extend such charges to this country.

For now, Microsoft China only offers domestic customers two services, Messenger and Hotmail, both of which are free.

"We are still researching the market," said Luo. "Because Microsoft still has not found a proper mode for developing the Chinese market, I cannot speculate as to the direction of development of MSN. One thing I am certain of, however, is that there may only be charges for Messenger for extra services or for cell-phone use."

New 'Supermarket' to Aid in Assets Restructuring

By Shan Jinliang

The establishment of China's first "financial supermarket" at the China Zhongguancun Technology and Equity Exchange (CTEE) in Zhongguancun, Haidian District, on August 18 is expected to help restructure and distribute a large amount of State-held non-performing assets.

The innovative market was set up by the CTEE and China's four major state-assets management enterprises. With its advanced trading system and network strength, Huarong State-Assets Management Corp. was chosen as a key cooperator.

"Buyers cannot find sellers and sellers cannot find buyers," said Huarong Beijing Office general manager Yang Kaisheng said at a press conference on August 19, "which is the ultimate problem in settling non-performing assets." He added that over 10 billion yuan worth of non-performing assets would be listed for sale in the market.

CTEE chairman Li Aiqing said at a previous press release on August 18 that the organization is planning to develop a number of new financial assets settlement agents and to arrange four special meetings to deal with non-performing assets from August to November.

McDonald's Seeks Solo Investors



Photo by photocom

By Ma Xiaosen/Shan Jinliang

Finally catching up to a long-run policy of KFC, American fast food giant McDonalds' made its first steps towards allowing individual Chinese investors to set up their own franchised restaurants last week. McDonalds' has already established over 400 chain restaurants in the Chinese mainland market.

From a list of 1,000 candidates compiled last year, McDonalds' has chosen the first mainland individual investor, a resident of Tianjin, who will be given franchising rights and approval to start business, the *Beijing Morning News* reported last Friday.

The chain's main competitor, KFC, has allowed franchising in China since 1998, charging 8 million yuan for rights, and now has over 700 restaurants in China.

Guo Geping, head of the China Chain Association, said the candidate McDonalds' franchisers have an average age of 35 and average potential investment of 5 million yuan.



John Snow

Washington, August 30 (AFP) - US Treasury Secretary John Snow is under pressure to tackle China's government this coming week about its nearly decade-old currency peg to the US dollar.

The US treasury secretary is due to stop over in Beijing Wednesday, as part of a wider regional tour starting in Tokyo Monday, and US lawmakers want him to take up China's currency peg during his meetings in the country.

Pressure was ratcheted up on Snow Friday when a group of senior US lawmakers wrote to the secretary to complain about artificially low-priced

Chinese imports which they said were due to the under-valuation of the Chinese yuan.

"We believe the current under-valuation of China's currency is contributing to job losses and business failure in the United States at a time of great economic strain," the letter stated. It was signed by Democratic senators Charles Schumer and Joe Lieberman, and Republican senators Olympia Snowe and Elizabeth Dole.

The letter follows close on the heels of a National Association of Manufacturers annual Labor Day report August

27 which called on the "Bush administration to get tough with the Chinese". China should be pressured to allow its currency to be set by the marketplace and end its practice of keeping its "exchange rate hugely undervalued," the NAM report added.

Analysts' Take:

China's policy of indexing the yuan against the US dollar in recent years had resulted in greater price stability than with countries that have adopted inflation-targeting exchange rate policies.

China's policy of targeting the dollar makes the yuan an anchor and gives policy-makers a rudder for determining the best policy mix.

As long as the dollar is stable in terms of US price levels, China should maintain the existing policy.

Letting the yuan float freely could result in deflation, delays in convertibility, increases in unemployment and may slow down China's export growth and increase the state-owned banks burden on non-performing loans.

- Robert Mundell, Nobel Prize-winning economist

Snow to Get Tough with China



A Turkish girl stands by a convoy of trucks carrying much needed gasoline from Turkey into Iraq, September 2. Fears have been expressed over the safety of the truck drivers.

AFP Photo

Business School Programs Suffer over Jobs, Economy Fears

August 30 (Financial Times) - Carolyn Brenna has been accepted for two business school programs starting this autumn. "Whichever school gives me the most in financial aid, that's probably where I'll end up," she says.

"I've been thinking about getting my MBA for a few years, but in this economy I have to think about cost, too."

Ms. Brenna's caution reflects that of other US business school applicants this year. According to recent figures by the Graduate Management Admissions Council, applications to MBA programs have suffered badly from fears over jobs and the economy.

A weaker performance than last year, when there was a record increase in applications, was broadly expected. But the softness was more pronounced than had been foreseen. Only 35 percent of full-time programs had an increase in applications for the 2002-03 academic year, compared with 84 percent for the previous year. In the academic period 2000-01 there was an increase of 68 percent.

Even more striking was that more schools — 40 percent — experienced a drop in applications than the number that had an increase.

"There are number of factors at work here," says Don Martin, associate dean of admissions at the University of Chicago Graduate School of Business. "Foreign students were concerned about visas, people are concerned about the cost of the education, and students are worried about finding jobs when they get out. One of the most frequent questions from those being interviewed for spots was about our career placement."

Fluctuations in the US economy affect demand for MBA places in ways that are often difficult to predict. At the peak of the Internet boom, business schools sometimes struggled to stop students dropping out.

The lure of getting rich at a high-technology start-up was often too much to resist.

When the US economy stumbled, many aspiring executives saw the downturn as an opportunity to hone their business skills. By the time they graduated, the reasoning went, the economy would be thriving again and they would secure a well-paid job.

But the recovery has been far weaker than many expected and unemployment remains an issue in the US. In contrast to other downturns, when low-level employees bore the brunt of job losses, this downturn is affecting middle and upper-level management. Rather than jump-starting their careers, employees worry that attending business school may be a short cut to the unemployment queue.

"Many are choosing to hold on to their jobs instead," says Beth Flye, head

of admissions for the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University. "And I think we need to be realistic with applicants about the challenges of securing jobs after graduation."

Kellogg has had a high number of applications from laid-off candidates in the past year. Indeed, Ms. Flye says the school does not necessarily see being without a job as a negative.

Then there is the question of who will pay for an MBA. Many parental bank accounts have shrunk and students' savings might have suffered with the stock market downturn. Corporations, too, are cutting expenses.

"Companies that have traditionally sponsored promising young people to go to business school are not as generous," says Ms. Flye.

Factors apart from the weak economy may also play a role. Some admissions directors believe corporate scandals have dampened enthusiasm for management studies.

Many foreign students have been discouraged from studying in the US for fear of terrorism or discrimination. Fears that applicants would not be able

to obtain the necessary visas in time have not helped.

Despite the downturn in applications, most business schools say they are not worried. Competition for spots remains fierce and most schools do not have trouble filling their places.

In some cases, admissions offices say they have even seen a rise in the quality of their applicant pool: MBA programs are no longer viewed as an easy route to high salaries and business schools appear to be attracting applicants who are serious about their education.

Stanford, which had a slight increase in the number of applicants, recorded some of the highest average test scores yet seen by the admissions office.

Business schools appear optimistic that they will see an improvement in applications. "In the long run, an MBA will pay off," says Ms. Flye. "That's the message we try to get across. But in the short term, market conditions mean graduates may have to work harder to land opportunities they would have taken for granted a few years ago."

Analysts' Take:

The concept of MBA education is still developing in China. The business schools offering MBA programs that have good teachers and offer high-quality courses will show their strength during the development. For the applicants who take MBA education as a kind of investment, to choose a high-level business school is the

best way to ensure their future career.

- Teng Haichuan, professor, Guanghua School of Management, Beijing University

Website Report:

MBAs have appeared in diverse forms. For the first time in China, Guanghua School of Management at Beijing University has of-

fered MBA programs on the net with a tuition fee of 26,000 yuan, only half the normal price. And the City College at Zhejiang University even offers MBA programs for 3,500 yuan. MBA courses have depreciated fast, and this causes a drop in acceptance by the market. Last year, a well-known domestic corporation put up an advert at a job fair offering to pay 2,000 yuan

a month for an MBA graduate. This sounds like a joke since according to a salary investigation by ChinaHR.com, in the previous year, the average annual salary of an MBA graduate was 83,000 yuan. The gap reflects the drop in the MBA market and the lack of confidence of corporations towards MBA students.

- Liu Yang, reporter

Nestle Threatens South Korea

Cheongju, South Korea, September 3 (AFP) - Swiss multinational Nestle joined the growing list of foreign firms bristling at labor unrest, saying it is considering pulling out of South Korea as a result.

Nestle, which has operated in South Korea for more than two decades, has already closed its local headquarters in Seoul.

"Our head office has instructed us to consider legal steps for the closure of Nestle's plant in South Korea," a Nestle Korea spokeswoman told AFP on Wednesday.

She said Nestle's management was exasperated by "reckless" labor action by workers affiliated with the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU), a militant labor group.

The group has led a wave of labor strife, demanding shorter working hours and union participation in management decision-making which has already led to the closure of four foreign-invested firms operating in South Korea this year.

Lovin' it, Hopefully

Munich, Germany, September 3 (AP) - McDonald's Corp. launched a new global advertising campaign Tuesday, seeking to freshen its image and boost business with the help of its new slogan — "I'm lovin' it."

The ads, which debuted on German television as the company unveiled the new concept in Munich, are part of a turnaround push that has seen McDonald's bring in a new chief executive and close hundreds of restaurants.

"It's advertising that, when people look at it, they will say, 'I've never seen that before from McDonald's,'" said Larry Light, the company's global chief marketing officer.

The new ads show people break dancing, diving into the ocean with a surfboard or speeding down a water slide, all to a hip-hop soundtrack.

(By David McHugh)

Latest Iraq Threat: Cash Crunch

Baghdad, September 3 (CSM) - The reconstruction of Iraq, Bush administration officials predicted before the war, will pay for itself.

But hopes of using Iraq's own oil and resources to fund the rebuilding were contingent on an ideal of postwar peace and security. Instead, a serious budget crunch, combined with a vicious circle of violence, sabotage, and economic instability is slowing reconstruction plans.

Many potential donor nations are shying away from getting involved. As international aid groups pull personnel out in the wake of the UN bombing, less foreign money is being pumped into the local economy. And, significantly, oil revenues aren't flowing as expected. A coalition official says that war damage and sabotage have stanching the flow to just \$2.3 billion per year, down from an earlier estimate of \$3.4 billion.

(By Ilene Prusher)



McDonald's fab new image

Philip Morris Grabs Serbian Tobacco Factory

Belgrade—September 2 (AFP) - US tobacco company Philip Morris and Serbia's government agency for privatization signed a deal Tuesday for the sale of state tobacco company DIN for 518 million euros, the biggest foreign investment in the republic since the fall of former strongman Slobodan Milosevic in 2000.

Serbian Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic, who attended the ceremony, said the deal has "forced him to fulfill a promise to my family to quit smoking."

Djindjic, Serbia's prime minister, was a member of the managing board of the Serbian state tobacco factory Duvanska Industrija Nis (DIN). "This is the biggest foreign investment in Serbia after the change of the regime and it will be a strong encouragement for other investors," Djindjic said.

Girl Has Extra Leg Removed

By Wang Xiaoxiao

Qingqing (pseudonym), a poor baby found abandoned in March because she had a strange, leg-like appendage growing from her back, underwent a successful six-hour operation to remove that extra limb at Dongzhimen Hospital on August 28.

Beijing Today first reported on Qingqing's sad story on August 15 as doctors at the hospital were preparing for surgery.

The surgery was only expected to last around three hours, but

when the doctors began to remove the appendage, they found it was closely connected to the girl's spinal cord, making the operation far more complicated than originally thought.

Once the appendage was removed, the procedure was far from over, as the doctors had to reconnect nerves and other tissue in the area to prevent any danger of paralysis.

Shortly after the operation, chief surgeon Dr. Xu Lin told *Beijing Today*, "The operation

was completely successful, but we will still have to hold her for observation, because complications could arise over the next three or four days."

Since the operation, doctors have concentrated on helping Qingqing strengthen her speech abilities and train her limbs. According to Liu Qingquan, director of the hospital's intensive care unit, the little girl is recovering well, as her appetite is increasing and she is sleeping soundly.

He added that while Qingq-



Qingqing

Photo by Lu Beifeng

ing's brain is normally developed, her legs have problems that have led to mild paralysis.

"We will conduct another operation in two years to help her regain the function of her legs. She's too young now to undergo such surgery," said Liu. After four days of intensive care, the brave girl was transferred to a normal hospital room filled with toys on Tuesday. The worst is behind her and she seems well on the road to full recovery and a healthy future.

Duped Art Buyer Sues Museum

By Lu Junying

Last Monday, the Beijing First Intermediate People's Court began to hear a lawsuit filed by a German man against the Xu Beihong Memorial Museum and a local art dealer. The plaintiff, John Korfer, claims he purchased paintings from the two defendants that turned out to be forgeries and then was not allowed to return the works for a full refund.

Over a two-year period starting in May 2001, Korfer spent around 115,000 yuan to purchase seven supposed original paintings by Xu Beihong, a recognized modern Chinese master, and four other artworks from the Wenzhijie Art Center inside the grounds of the Xu Beihong Memorial Museum.

Korfer's lawyer presented the paintings to the court and showed that they carried the museum's official stamp.

In the indictment, Korfer accused center manager Wang Gaosheng of claiming all the works were originals and that he was Xu Beihong's grandson.

In the summer of 2002, Korfer was shocked when experts from Holland, Hong Kong and Germany identified his treasured paintings as forgeries.

Shortly afterwards, he demanded a full refund for the paintings, but Wang only agreed to the return of three proven to be copies by Beijing experts. Korfer is seeking payment of another 195,000 yuan in compensation for the other forgeries.

Before the court, Wang admitted to using the museum's stamp without permission, but otherwise denied charges of fraud, stressing that Korfer should have known the artworks were not originals when he bought them. "According to Chinese law, authentic classic artworks are considered cultural relics and not allowed to be taken out of the country," he said.



Photo by Photocome

Spelunkers Check Cave Stream

By Dong Nan

Six explorers from China and the UK took their first steps into Yuwang Cave in Hunan Province last Friday, beginning a 20-day investigation of the site. The water-eroded cave, located near You town in Zhuzhou city, may house the world's longest subterranean stream.

On the first day of their underground journey, the spelunking team used sophisticated equipment to reach an estimate that the river could be over 10 kilometers long. The waterway is so deep in some places that they are also planning a daring diving excursion to get a closer look.

Over the next several days, the team will continue research of Yuwang Cave and also investigate the nearby Taoyuan, Yue-liang and Haitang Caves.

Washed Up



Photo by Dongzi

By Chen Si/Dai Yini

Powerful Typhoon Dujuan, which ripped through Southeast China this week, blew some unexpected debris ashore at Wenzhou, Zhejiang Province, on Tuesday - Australian explorer Dekiere Hermi Arthur. After staying in the city for two days, Arthur, 52, resumed his solo sea voyage yesterday.

Arther set out one year ago from Australia on a sailing expedition that has taken him to many countries in East Asia, including Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan. He was bound

for Shanghai when his small, one-man boat was hit by the high winds, rain and waves of Typhoon Dujuan and forced ashore.

"When he floated into Yanting Port in Yanting town in Wenzhou, there was something wrong with his boat," Dai Yini, a reporter at the *Wenzhou Business Post*, told *Beijing Today* Thursday, "But local fishermen helped him with repairs."

Arthur has 20 years navigating experience and had traveled to over 60 countries. After a brief stay in China, he is planning to sail on to South Korea and Japan.

Air China Crew Prevent In-Air Hari-Kari

By Lu Junying

The crew of Air China flight CA933 from Paris to Beijing via Shanghai's Pudong Airport were forced to take quick action to keep a foreign passenger from performing ritual suicide with a pair of scissors last Sunday.

The airline has disclosed that the man had earlier been turned away along with a Chinese woman from the Paris International Airport due to problems with his passport, but refused to reveal his name, nationality or other personal information.

"He looked like he was from South Asia and appeared very depressed," Ma Yanjun, the head steward on the flight, told www.jfdaily.com on Tuesday.

Two and a half hours after the plane took off from Paris, a stewardess found the man sitting alone in the last row of the economy section trying to slice his stom-

ach open with a pair of scissors he had hidden in his bags. She called for help and steward Li Yu rushed over and tried to take the scissors from the distraught passenger, followed by two other crew members.

The man smashed his head into a side wall, throttled himself and cried out in English "I want to go back to Sri Lanka!" as four crew members tried to subdue him.

A Chinese doctor on board managed to force a tranquilizer pill down his throat, then treated his wound with help from the flight crew.

The passenger finally calmed down and was turned over to the Shanghai Frontier Defense Department when the flight arrived at Pudong International Airport last Sunday and then was put in the custody of the Shanghai Bureau of Public Security.

The case is still under investigation.

Community Suffers under Radio Waves

By Yu Shanshan/Wang Jue

A developer's poor choice of location has led to significant health problems among residents of the Dongrun-fengjing community in the Jiuxianqiao area as a result of the heavy radiation emitted by two nearby state-owned radio towers.

The people living in the development, which was built by the Baorun Real Estate Development Company under Tianhong Group in late 2001, are now seeking a solution to the problem and compensation.

According to an article in Tuesday's *Beijing Times*, nearly 40 percent of the community's residents have developed health problems, including depression, fatigue, memory loss, insomnia, heart trouble and weakened immunity.

One resident, a Mr. Wu who has suffered months of insomnia, said "I feel better when I'm away from the area and worse when I'm actually at home."

The developers chose the site for the community under the impression that the two towers were out-of-use aerial navigation towers, when in fact they are two functioning radio towers owned by the Beijing People's Radio Station. The east tower, which stands just

260 meters from the Dongrunfengjing development, emits 50,000 watts of FM radio waves daily and the south tower, 400 meters away, emits 100,000 watts.

Investigations conducted by environmental specialists have shown that the levels of electromagnetic radiation in the community are 30 times higher than national standard.

However, Chai Zhikun, president of Tianhong Group, told the *Beijing Times* that before they chose the site for the development in 1998, the plot's former owner, Dongfeng Agricultural, Industrial and Commercial Company, had conducted thorough tests of the area's environment. A test conducted in 2000 by Tsinghua University's Department of Environmental Science and Engineering and a follow-up test done in 2002 by the Beijing Municipal Research Institute of Environmental Protection both led to conclusions that the towers would not effect residents' health.

Chai said his company is actively seeking a solution to the problem. Aside from constructing a protective screen between the community and the towers, the company signed a contract with Beijing People's Radio Station to move the two towers on August 21.



A local resident (right) examines one of the offending sculptures (left). Photo by Yang Yingyun

Rich Residents Reject Sculptures

By Chen Si

Just 30 minutes after 12 sculptures were installed for display in the luxurious Jindian Garden community in Xicheng District, residents reacted with extreme disgust and forced the offending artworks to be taken away.

The works were created by Zhang Jianhua, a graduate student at the Central Academy of Fine Arts, and all shared the theme of the difficult lives of China's rural population. One representative work is a life-sized portrayal of an old woman clothed in rags taking a rest, her wrinkled face testimony to decades of struggle.

The sculptures were first exhibited on July 19 at the Today Gallery. The gallery's management then decided to

move them to the Jindian community to set up a deliberate comparison of the ease of urban life with these portrayals of rural suffering.

That comparison, however, clearly was not welcomed by the community's residents. One Jindian homeowner who requested anonymity called the sculptures insults to the image of China's peasants. "Peasants in China are great, they should glorified, not disgraced," he said.

Mr. Zhang, who works for the community's service department, stated the residents' strong reactions were completely unexpected. "We want to run more art exhibitions in the future, so we will pay attention to finding works easier to accept by our residents," he said.

Firefighters Save Herd from Slow, Hot Death

By Lu Junying

The staff of the Beijing Ya'aolan Breeding Center were especially happy to have sold 150 cows for 600,000 yuan last Wednesday, as their entire herd was saved from mortal danger by firemen from the Pinggu District fire department only a few weeks before.

The breeding center, located in Zhanggezhuang village in Pinggu, is home to over 500 head of cattle. Danger struck on July 16 when the center's water supply was accidentally cut off.

"We knew that if we didn't get the cows water before the early afternoon, they were going to start suffering heat-stroke and dying," Xu Jinchuan, general manager of the breeding center, told *Beijing*

Youth Daily last Thursday. He added that around 360 cows, with a total market value of at least 2 million yuan, were in mortal danger.

Salvation finally came in the form of the Pinggu firemen, who arrived two hours after the managers of the center dialed 119 with enough water to ensure the cows' safety. Water supply to the center resumed in the afternoon.



Pinggu hosers help the thirsty cows. Photo by Liu Zhiyuan



Experimental grapes for research

Photos by Hu Rong

Hope They Taste Good

By Chen Si

How much for a bunch of grapes? Say, 400,000 yuan? Four migrant workers from Henan Province would probably rather do time than cough up that amount in fines for stealing the fruit. Unfortunately, they'd snatched highly valuable batches of grapes being grown in a research project.

As reported by *Beijing Today* on August 15, the grapes were being grown for experimental fruit research by the Forestry and Fruit Institute under the Beijing Academy of Agri-Forestry Sciences. Since 1993, 400,000 yuan has been invested in the project. The scientists are furious, saying it'll take a year to repair the damage. Beijing Public Security Bureau, Haidian Branch has invited four legal experts to discuss the men's punishment.

Li Gaoshang, who used to work in the China Forestry Fruit Tree Research Institute, led his three accomplices to the grape area and they dug their way in on August 6. On their way back home, they were spotted and questioned by officers from the Fragrant Hills Police Station. They later said if they had known the grapes were so special, they would not have stolen them.

Xu Haiying, manager of the grape development project, said the men destroyed 20 of the 110 grapevines in the research unit. "These grapes are used for culturing grape seeds, and we keep records for each vine and conduct periodical comparison tests. We were going to conduct a full review in September," she said. Luckily, most of the plants were not destroyed. But important data has been lost, and it will take another year for the vines to recover. Ms. Zhang, working for the Forestry and Fruit Institute, said no warning sign had been put up as



A guard shows where the thieves got in.

to the nature of the grapes. And though Li Gaoshang had worked there, he had left a year ago and was probably unaware of the value of the stolen fruit.

Should the men be imprisoned or fined? If fined, how much? Is the Forestry and Fruit Institute partly to blame?

Xu Haiying, manager of the grape development project

A few hundred yuan would not make up for all the loss. However, it is unnecessary to expect the men to put up the full 400,000 yuan invested in the project, as they did not destroy all the grapes and cannot afford to pay that much. They are still young. I hope it is a lesson for them this time.

Chen Xingliang, professor of School of Law from Beijing University

Their guilt depends on whether the men knew the value of the grapes. People stealing ordinary grapes just have civil responsibilities, like offering compensation. But if they stole the valuable grapes on purpose, it's larceny.

Since the grapes were being used for research, the men would also be guilty of sabotage.

Chen Weidong, professor of School of Law, Renmin University

It is a little difficult to convict the men of larceny, as it would be hard to put a value on the stolen grapes. In China, only theft of goods worth over 1,000 yuan can be considered larceny.

Gu Chongqing, a retired resident of Tuanjiehu, Chaoyang District, Beijing

How did the men enter the institute so easily? If the grapes are so valuable, why was there no warning sign? The men were unaware of the grapes' value, so offering compensation is enough. Just like the Chinese saying, "If you are unaware of it, then you are innocent."

Mr. Li, working for the Forestry Resource Research Institute, the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences

I think the Forestry and Fruit Institute should take part of the responsibility. Protection against

theft is necessary, which includes plastic covers on the fruit and a warning sign. Actually, valuable plants in our institute are planted in labs; those planted in the open air are usually not so important. People working in the Forestry and Fruit Institute know the stolen grapes are valuable, but still did not attach much importance, leaving them in the open air with no warning sign, so it is partly their fault.

Zhong Weiping, working for a Sino-German joint venture in Beijing

In my opinion, the Forestry and Fruit Institute has no responsibility. Everyone knows the task of a research institute is to do research. Why should there be a sign reading "Rare grapes, used for research, keep off" in the middle of a research institute? If a man killed you, could we say it was because you did not protect yourself?

Duan Congxin, working for Beijing Capital International Airport

The men should be strictly punished, even put into prison. Though the loss is great, we cannot condemn the negligence of the Forestry and Fruit Institute. Stealing in an ordinary place is not the same as stealing from a research institute. The plants in research institutes are used for research of great value. The thieves cannot be declared innocent just because of their lack of awareness.

Rachel Morris, American, from Stanford University

I think they should be punished according to law. Similar cases have occurred in the USA. For example, a Chinese postdoctoral student stole research materials from his lab and tried to take them back to China. He was arrested in the airport and was found guilty. Therefore, no matter whether these guys did these things on purpose or not, their behavior is against the law.

Quittin' Time

By Wang Xiaoxiao

At the recent Ninth National Congress of the All-China Women's Federation, the old theme of whether women should retire at the same age as men was again brought up for discussion.

Xia Yinlan, dean of the School of International Education of the China University of Political Science and Law, says part of the reason for the regulation that women should retire five years earlier than men was concern for the health of post-menopausal women. But even though it was originally intended as a favorable policy for women, Xia feels it's outdated.

With the development of society, more women receive higher education than before, and the average life-span has lengthened as well. Many feel that forcing highly qualified women to retire five years earlier is, in some ways, a waste of human resources.

Xia also points out the pressure it puts women under to make progress in their careers while they still have time. Earlier retirement also means a lower pension. Xia believes women should have the right to choose when to retire. That way they can still retire earlier if they want.

However, this suggestion has not exactly met with widespread enthusiasm from the public. Ironically, women workers in particular have been unenthusiastic about changing the regulation. Different groups have their own opinions.

Dong Lanping, female, 50, Capital Iron and Steel Company

Oh my god! I will retire just next month. I have been longing for my retirement for such a long time. I get less from the factory now than I will after retirement. I also work as an insurance agent at the moment and that brings me more happiness. My child will go abroad to study, which forces me to work hard now. Otherwise, I would rather stay at home and do whatever I want. I'd prefer it if men were forced to retire five years earlier.

Amedee Suijver, a Dutch student

In Holland, gender or ethnicity make no difference to when people retire. I do not know much about the legal situation of women in different countries, but it seems to me that if you are forced to retire at an early age, working becomes a right and in this case women should have equal rights to men. I guess it also depends on how this arrangement leaves women off financially. If they have to retire earlier, does that mean they become financially dependent on men? Are they more likely to be left behind in promotions because the employer knows women have to stop working earlier? Do women then get bad jobs because they become less worthwhile as an employee?

Yang Zhanzhou, male, 49, head of a government department

For those who work as laborers, it's right that an age

limit should be set in order to protect them. But there's no point stipulating the age officials should retire at. It is like a market for human resources. The government shouldn't decide the retirement age; the market should. If you are really a good clerk, the market won't discard you. But if you are good for nothing, it's as well the market should let you go. To me, it's not a threat if female officials around me retire at the same age as me. Competition is always there, whether with women or men. I'm experienced in my work and have been doing well all these years, so I'm not afraid of competition.

Zhang Yunyan, female, 50, associate professor, Guangqumen Middle School

I don't think it's a big deal. We can't say that women and men are equal just because they retire at the same age. But now it's a market economy, things should compete with each other, even people. So if you can do what you can in your old age, just do it. The government shouldn't set an age limit to stop those who can still work well. On the other hand, it can't also force those who don't wish to work any more to keep on working.

As a teacher, I really feel the difference between age 40 and 50. I could climb to the fourth floor 10 years ago without any break, but now, even climbing up one floor makes me breathless. I do get more now than my pension will give me. But I'd like to give my place to younger teachers if someone can replace me. Then I could do what I like and the spiritual gain is, in a sense, more important than the extra money I could get from work.

Michael Schwartz, lawyer, US

Here, retirement age is not set by law, at least in general. There are certain exceptions for demanding jobs, like a firefighter. I think, though, that there are no differences for men or women. Sometimes there are fitness requirements, so women tend to fail them at a slightly earlier age, just because of physical differences. But that is generally not the way things are done over here.

Wen Lingyu, female, 49, a clerk in the Office of Retirement, Chunshu light component factory

The workers who have left their working position but have not yet officially retired in my factory wish to retire as soon as possible. Sometimes, people may think that women workers wish to retire at an early age due to their lack of energy. But in my opinion, that's not the case. It actually depends on the situation of a factory. If the factory is still doing well, the workers may get more money by working. But if the factory can't afford the salaries of the workers, it is of course a wise choice to retire. Anyway, the workers in my factory receive much less than their pension is worth. So as far as I'm concerned, I don't support the idea that women should retire five years later.

By Chen Si

SOUND BITES

"I believe the way to improve the economy is to give working people a reasonable and fair wage and a decent set of working conditions so maybe they could put a little bit of money into the economy."

— Former Vermont Governor Howard Dean. Dean called Bush a poor custodian of the nation's economy and condemned the Bush tax cuts as handouts for big corporations. Democratic presidential candidates, campaigning in Iowa, criticized President Bush's handling of the economy

and urged union members Monday to organize labor support to defeat the president in 2004.

"This is a complex problem with deep social roots, closely linked to crime, drugs, economic problems, the breakdown of the family and society, frustration, resentment and the loss of values."

— The state government of Mexico said in a news release. A nightmare of killings has haunted northern Mexico's young women for a decade, and families of vic-

tims. Sixteen young women have disappeared in Chihuahua since 2000, seven of them turning up dead in circumstances eerily similar to the killings in Juarez 200 miles to the north.

"What matters to us is honor. We don't care about money. The case of Lockerbie is now behind our backs. The Libyans have displayed wisdom and courage as well as efficiency in conducting this strategic conflict."

— Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi. He said on Sunday a

second agreement over compensation has been reached between his country and the families of 170 victims of a French airliner that exploded in 1989. Following Libya's commitment to pay the Lockerbie compensation, accept responsibility for the bombing and renounce terrorism, Britain proposed to the UN Security Council to lift sanctions preventing arm sales and air travel to the north African country.

"I am not a fan of myself."
— Actor Charles Bronson, who

died this week at the age of 81. He told Reuters' Robert Basler in a 1985 interview that he knew what entertained him in a film, and it was not Charles Bronson. Coal miner turned tough-guy actor of more than 60 films, Bronson was famed for the "Death Wish" series in which he played a character pushed over the edge by a brutal assault on his family.

"This is the site of a national Labor Day outrage. This is going to be for economic justice what Selma was for the right to vote."

— Rev. Jesse Jackson, who was among those arrested, led more than 1,000 people on a march on the Labour Day of the United States. On the Labor Day, protesters rallied for striking workers and union members marched in parades.

Labor Day events were generally peaceful, but 14 people were arrested after blocking an intersection on the Yale University campus in support of striking university service and clerical workers.

Part Time Lovers

Is China entering an era of non-sexual marriage?

By Dong Nan

More than a quarter of married couples in China are passing up lovemaking, mainly in order to focus on their careers. According to a survey run by Pan Suiming, a sexologist at Renmin University, 28.7% of Chinese couples aged between 20 and 64 make love once a month or less in an average year; for 6.2% it's once a year.

According to sociologists, a healthy couple who do not have sexual intercourse for at least one month could be described as having a non-sexual relationship. *Beijing Today* reported on this increasing phenomenon last year amid fears of "national impotence". Is China entering an era of non-sexual marriage?

Hard work: no.1 downer

The 1960s saw an economic boom in Japan, but not everyone was happy. Many Japanese housewives complained that their husbands' careers deprived them of sex. Their men worked in companies and factories till midnight, and came back exhausted only to have a sleep.

It seems China is heading in a similar direction. People are busier making money and have less time for sex.

"On our honeymoon, we made love four or five times everyday. Since then it's been once a month," says Liu Ying, a thirty-year-old high school teacher.

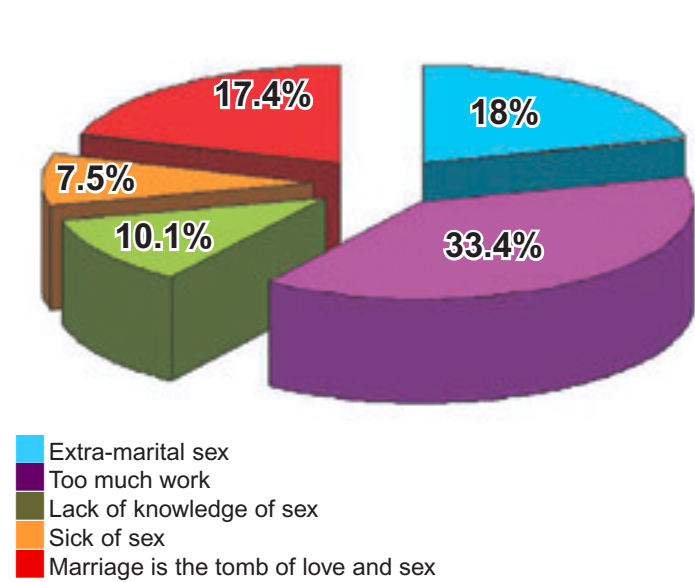
Liu Ying's husband is the boss of a middle-size Internet company. "He has to deal with various things day and night. He usually goes to sleep as soon as he comes back home at about midnight. In any case, I am busy with my students. Neither of us have the energy for sex."

Once on Liu's birthday, the couple planned to have a relaxing day. But Liu couldn't stop worrying about her students' tests and her husband's mobile phone never stopped ringing. The couple made love at last, but without much passion.

According to Pan's report, many young couples around 30 years of age have this problem. Their careers are in the most crucial stage, so they have to pay more attention to their job than family life.

"They are tired and unhappy. In order to make progress

An Opinion Poll by www.163.com about Reasons for Non-sexual Marriage (4,530 people involved)



in their jobs, they give up on sex," says Pan's report.

In an online survey by www.163.com involving 3,687 people, more than a third said too much work was the reason their sex lives were suffering.

A sexual revolution?

Pan's survey shows that 20.8% of men and 5.5% of women above 40 years old have had more than one sexual partner. In people from 30 to 34 years old, the number rises to 45.8% and 17.7%. While more than a quarter of couples do not have sexual intercourse, more and more people are having extra-marital sex.

"Everyone loves the new and loathes the old. It is human nature," says Li Wenzheng, a 38-year-old man who has a wife and a lover. When asked about sex with his wife, he just says, "A man's energy is not infinite." Divorce is increasingly seen as the solution, but many people are willing to suffer their partners' infidelity.

"I'm old and no longer attractive to my husband," says 43-year-old Hao Jing bitterly. "He does not like to touch me at all. I know he has a young lover." Many of her relatives and friends know her dilemma, but she maintains the unhappy marriage in order not to hurt their young son.

Too old?

Couples above 50 years old

are a large segment of those in non-sexual relationships.

Pan's survey reveals Chinese men have sexual intercourse for the first time at 23.3 years old on average. They then have sex once a month, on average, until they're 43.9 years old. Apparently, male sexual activity tends to tail off at the age of 55.9. In another words, they have just over 30 years of sexual activity.

Chinese women have even less time. They have their first sexual experience at 22.12 years on average, but it all tapers out at 52.48 years old. However, according to statistics provided by Pan, many US couples make love once a week well into their 50s.

"I know of some women above 50 years old who think it is not suitable for women of their age to have sex. If their husbands ask for it, they would feel embarrassed and even criticize their husbands as an 'old goat'," says Xu Zhenlei, sexologist and psychologist of Beijing University.

"In fact, men's sexual organs can work well into their 60s."

Lack of skill

In the survey by www.163.com, people mentioned a variety of common problems in their sex lives, including partners who are "only willing to use one position", or making love directly without

any "preparations".

There seems to be a lack of knowledge and skill in the sexual arena in China. According to Pan's survey, nearly one half of women under 40 years old do not know where their clitoris is, and the number is two thirds among women above 40 years old. *Beijing Today* interviewed one man whose problem focused on positions. His wife refused to use any position other than quietly lying down under her husband. He tried oral sex, but his wife said it was "indecent and dirty". Once he borrowed some videos and hoped she might learn some skills. But his wife called him a "sex maniac" angrily and refused to make love with him for two weeks.

After that, he didn't dare to ask his wife to "learn more". The couple has had less sex ever since, and now they get down to it once or twice a month at most. "I would rather masturbate than make love with my wife," he says sheepishly.

Find a solution!

Renowned sociologist Li Yin-he used to claim that the frequency of sexual intercourse is but a personal consideration; how often is down to the willingness and ability of the couple themselves. There is no need for a standard of normal sexual activity.

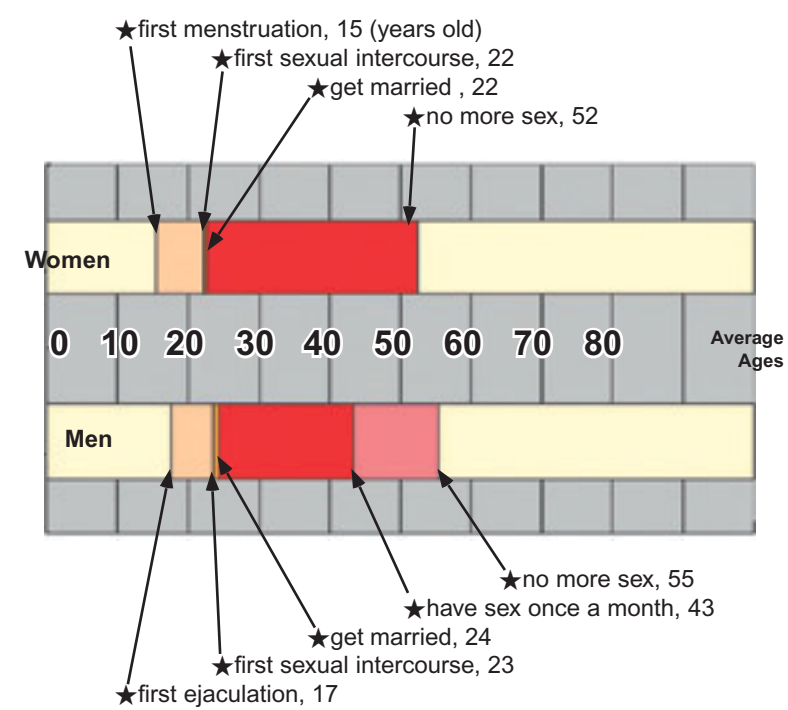
However, if a healthy couple does not have sex at all, the marriage could hardly be called "normal" or "happy".

Xu Zhenyu believes that non-sexual relationships are sure to reduce along with the development of the economy — as living standards improve, people will pay more attention to the quality of sexuality.

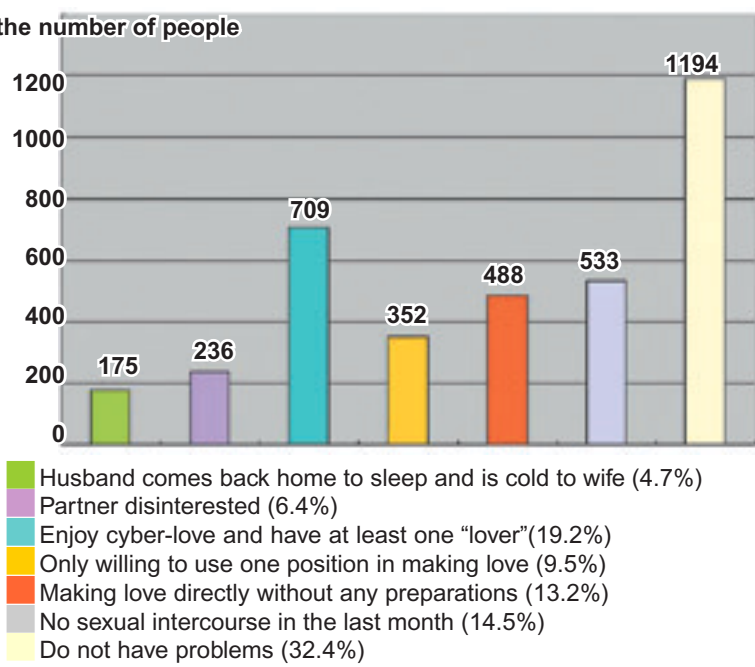
Pan Suiming's statistics seem to add some weight to Xu's conclusion. According to the survey, men who had sexual intercourse in the last week had an average salary of 1,369 yuan per month, and men who had had no action in a year had an average salary of less than 770 yuan a month. But Pan doesn't take development of the economy as the major solution.

"I think the culprit for non-sexual relationships is the absence of love and the lack of sex education," he says.

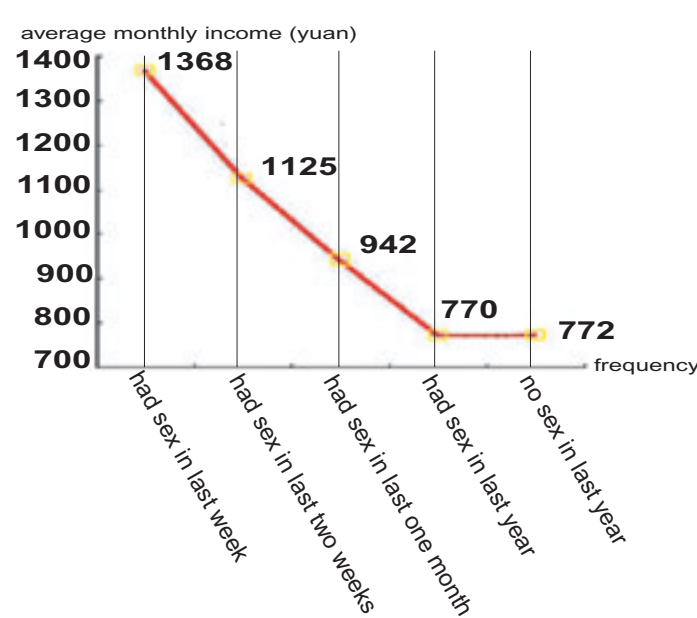
Average Sex Lives of Chinese Men and Women



An Online Survey by www.163.com about Problems in Sex Lives (3,678 people involved)



Frequency of Sexual Intercourse and Income



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By Wang Xiaoxiao

Six Chinese women were drowned on Tuesday last week after being pushed overboard by smugglers trying to get them into Taiwan.

Fearing capture by coast guards, the smugglers, known as "snakehead" gangs, pushed the 26 women onboard into the sea near Tunghsiao on the island's west coast. Twenty survived, though two of them were injured.

According to local press reports, the 26 women, from Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Hubei, Sichuan and Jilin provinces, were all between 21 and 28 years old. They had been lured by promises of high-paying jobs.

Brutal treatment

The 26 women left Fuzhou, capital of Fujian Province, by a fishing boat for the island on the evening of August 24. They got onto two speedboats bound for Taiwan in the evening of the next day. Early in the morning on August 26, they were spotted traveling at high speed towards the shore and a coast guard vessel was immediately sent to intercept them. As soon as they saw the coast guards coming, the smugglers simply pushed the 26 women overboard and sped off.

All the women were believed to have paid around 200,000 New Taiwan dollars (US\$5,848) each for the trip.

"We didn't receive any food or drink for three days. We felt exhausted by the time we saw the coast guard vessel approaching. The smugglers dragged me by my hair and kicked me out of the boat," said one of the women, identified as Xu Zhengzheng, on local television there.

Zheng Min, 21, was the last to be pushed into the water. Born in a poor village, Zheng had been working in Guangdong for a year. "Luckily I wasn't too far from the shore when they pushed me in and I could swim a little. I was saved by the police but my cell phone and more than 1,000 yuan cash were lost," she recalled.

Chen Yanji, one of the injured, has been in hospital for a few days.

"I got to know two Taiwanese men in an internet café and was told I could make two or three times as much money working in Taiwan," said Chen. "I'm not beautiful and I thought there was no reason for them to cheat me so I accepted their arrangements for the trip."

Smugglers arrested

A coast guard official, Huang Yun-huang, was quoted in local news reports saying that four men had been arrested in connection with the case at Penghu Island, west of Taiwan.

One of them, Yeh Tien-sheng, had been detained briefly on August 14 for questioning about the human smuggling, Huang said.

By August 30, 18 more had been arrested in connection with the incident by the Fujian Border Defence Bureau, including 13 smugglers and five women planning to smuggle themselves into Taiwan.

Further arrests

Just one day after the tragedy, another 34 women were smuggled into the island. Among them were three Russian women as well.

They left Fujian on August 23 and had been on the sea for four days. They were originally supposed to land on the same day as the other 26 women. But when the captain heard of the incident, he decided to stay out at sea to evade the coast guards.

The 34 women arrived at about 8 pm on August 27, and were told to hide under a large sponge mat in a truck. Early on August 28, they were discovered by the Taiwan Border Defense Office. The driver and the 34 women were taken in for questioning.

Call for cooperation

According to a report in *China Daily* on August 30, in the first eight months of this year, 1,231 people have been apprehended after being smuggled into Taiwan from the mainland. Most of them were women.

The authorities in Taiwan say it's a regular phenomenon. Hundreds of mainland women are lured there every year by the promise of high-paying jobs, but most of them end up in prostitution.

Fujian Province has been working to crack down on human trafficking to Taiwan over the past few years. Colonel Cheng Sheng, head of the Provincial Frontier Defense Force of Fujian, promised further efforts to crack down on the smugglers. But he also stressed that closer cooperation between both sides of the straits could help prevent human smuggling.

Wei Zhongci, director of Fujian's Taiwan Affairs Office, said: "Fujian hopes that the relevant departments in Taiwan can report the identities of the six dead as soon as possible. We will provide every possible support to the victims' families to deal with funeral arrangements if any of the dead is found to be a Fujian resident."

Red Cross organizations on the mainland and Taiwan have been making preparations to transport the 20 survivors back to their mainland homes.

Smugglers to face murder charges

Local media reports said the six drowned mainland women had already been identified and that their family members would receive compensation of up to 1.4 million New Taiwan dollars (US\$399,000).

The four Taiwanese suspects - Yeh Tien-sheng, Tseng Chung-ming, Wang Chung-hsing and Ko Ching-song - are being held at the Prosecutors' Office in Miaoli in Taiwan. Prosecutors said they could face murder charges.



The suspects

Six Drowned in Smuggling Tragedy



Two of the survivors phone home.

AFP photo

Reading Wars

City's first private library challenges state owned

By Shan Jinliang

"It is really a fun place," said seven-year-old Li Zhenqiang, leaning back in a swing-chair in a small library in Beijing's Shijingshan District on the afternoon of August 27. Before the summer school holidays ended, he spent several afternoons here, reading books until his mother finished work.

Almost resembling a bar, without the music, the library is the city's first private neighborhood library. Called the Beijing Science and Education Library, it opened on August 19.

Literary investment

The library is actually the tenth established by 36-year-old Pan Yueyong. The other nine are in his home province of Shandong. Pan mortgaged his home in 1999 to raise the finance for his first library, in the city of Jinan.

"We have altogether 300 employees and have received over 10 million visitors. We feel proud to meet the needs of the neighborhoods we serve without receiving a penny of funding from the government," Pan told *Beijing Today* last Thursday. He says he plans to establish 100 membership libraries nationwide within three years.

As well as a "book bar," where visitors can sit and read in a comfortable environment, the library also offers fee-based information searches, book wholesaling and foreign language courses. Pan promises potential franchisers that he intends eventually to build his network of libraries into a platform for cultural industry, once a sufficient level of public recognition has been achieved.

Limited impact

Zheng Qiulian, the head librarian at Shijingshan Children's Library, which is just 10 minutes walk from Pan's Science and Education Library, warned of a risk of over-commercialization by the newcomer in an interview with *Beijing Today*, however she said she believed the local government would act to en-



Fang Xiaoying reads a book in one of the swing chairs at the new Beijing Science and Education Library.

Photo by Yang Feng

sure Pan's library remained oriented towards serving the public interest, while encouraging some of its commercial activities.

According to Pan, the Science and Education Library now has over 800 members, but Zheng maintained her library has not been affected. Commenting on Pan's claim, she said that a number of these members had been given free library cards.

Zheng pointed to the Science and Education Library's collection of 100,000 books, compared to the 170,000 of her library, and the fact that her library organized regular promotional activities for local children. The Shijingshan District Library is also due to undergo a major renovation project. "The Science and Education Library might have made a mistake in choosing Shijingshan as its Beijing headquarters," said Zheng.

Tang Gengsheng, secretary general of the China Society of Library Science was not as optimistic as Zheng, saying that the readers would be the decisive factor, and it would take time to tell who was the

real winner in the competition. She added that both in China and overseas, it was the opinions of users of the library, rather than the size of the book collection that determined the standard of a library.

Now the three libraries in Shijingshan District, the third being Shijingshan District Library, have formed a competitive and supplementary relationship, since they are only around 10 minutes walk from one another, according to Pan. "You (the other two state-owned libraries) target the whole district while I only focus on the immediate neighborhood, which enables me to better communicate and serve the public," he added.

Market doubts

Most industry analysts interviewed by *Beijing Today* expressed doubt that Pan's library could survive for long. Geng Sheng, secretary general of the China Society of Library Science told *Beijing Today* Monday that without income from other sources, the library would soon meet a shortfall in capital.

A business person who had ex-

pressed interest in a franchise, and who requested anonymity, said he would wait and see before making a decision. "I do not see a clear prospect of profit," he said, adding that a profit in the short term seemed unlikely.

Meanwhile Tang pointed out that the three libraries would have to fight for the same readers, given their close proximity, but for Pan's library, unlike the state-funded competitors, its survival would depend on the outcome of the fight.

Nonetheless, Pan expressed confidence that his membership drive would succeed, proclaiming that it would take only four months to one year for the library to start making a profit. He said his flexible management model would be the greatest advantage over the state-owned libraries.

Tang, however remained skeptical that Pan's Science and Education Library would ever pose a threat to the national library system, but predicted that the competition would lead to an improvement in service. "I really hope the Science and Education Library will grow up to better serve the public," she added.

In a telephone interview with *Beijing Today* last Thursday, director of the Social Culture section at the Beijing Municipal Bureau of Culture, Huang Haiyan, said the government supported the establishment of the city's first private library. "The bureau will even allocate a certain level of funding once it has proved itself after a two-year period," Huang said.

Huang pointed out some of the advantages private libraries have over state-owned ones. "Private libraries like the Science and Education Library have designed a very good cultural environment, a market-oriented management mode, operate under longer business hours and offer more flexible services," she said.

The comments were echoed by some of the young readers at the Science and Education Library. "It is really a site for leisure, with comfortable chairs and sofas," 21-year-old Fang Xiaoying told *Beijing Today*, "it is not a traditional library but more like a book bar." However she also complained that there was not a big enough variety of books.

By Guo Yuandan

“Mingong” or migrant workers may perform vital tasks, but that doesn't make them more popular. Dressed often in ragged or dirty clothes, carrying huge bags and speaking in distant dialects, they suffer rather than are welcomed in the capital.

“Beijingers think we pollute their air and that our baggage takes their space, even though we've bought tickets for the bus, just like them,” says Guo Tao, a worker from the countryside who had high hopes when he came to the big city. “They always look at us scornfully, but our work is also great. Without us, they couldn't live in their new houses.”

Different status

Guo Tao, 20, has been working on a building site for one year.

Three years ago, after having graduated from junior middle school in Gu'an County, Hebei Province, Guo Tao came to Beijing. He did a variety of jobs but eventually had to settle for life as a builder. “My father is a builder. I don't have much education, and few chances to find other jobs. But being a builder is at least a straightforward job. And because I am the smallest one, they treat me well.”

Guo Tao is working as a “shuigong”; he is in charge of waterpower for a local construction company. “I know one of the leaders in the company, so I got the chance to be a water worker. The job is not too tiring compared with what other workers do, but it isn't that well paid. I get about 500 yuan per month.”

He's probably better off than the most basic laborers. Lacking any skills, they do the most physical work like digging and moving bricks. They get around 20 yuan for a day's work. Tilers and men who work with concrete get about 30 yuan per day. The signaler is the only worker who is required to have a national license, and gets about 600 yuan per month.

The leader of one group, usually of about 10 workers, is called a Zuzhang. They don't get any more money but can delegate tasks. The section chief (Gongzhang) does not work. He gets about 1,000 yuan a month for supervising and reporting to the boss.

Living space

Guo says that in one of the buildings on his construction site, over 1000 workers used to sleep in one basement. That was before SARS, after which such large crowds in one space

Building a Life

became too dangerous. Now 14 builders share one dormitory according to the regulations. Taps for washing are out in the yard. And, of course, only the bosses have air conditioning in their dormitory.

Though standards vary at different building sites, food usually isn't provided free. The builders Guo works with pay 5 yuan per day for their food, even though they only get the cheapest stuff, usually vegetables. Bosses occasionally buy builders some meat, in order to encourage them to work hard. After getting their money, the builders often go to a restaurant for a proper feed. “I have to do that,” says Guo, “in order to settle a month's worth of hunger in one supper.”

The workers get up at 4:30 am. The work time is about 13 hours, but if the project is running behind, overtime is a must. Only in the heaviest rains will work be suspended. The workers put up with this, knowing that if the boss is penalized for any delays, the workers will be the scapegoats in the end.

Countrymen

Tower building is very dangerous, and accidents often happen. But workers usually have no insurance and must rely on their company's “generosity” to cover medical bills.

Guo Tao says he has been lucky and has yet to suffer an accident. But once, when he was working in Tongzhou, a suburb of Beijing, he saw one man fall from a building and injure his leg. “The boss brought him to hospital and paid the fees. But the man did not get any time to rest. For each day he didn't work, he got no money.” That worker was relatively lucky.



Other injured workers have been left without a cent to cover their medical costs.

Trust is a key part of construction employment so people often agree to work for someone from their hometown or region. As most construction firms are privately owned, the guarantees for both sides are less binding. Often there is no written contract, just a spoken promise. Bosses are worried that they will be left in a hole if their workers strike, so they only pay them on completion of the job. But for workers, this poses the problem that bosses frequently refuse to pay them after they've finished. Both sides, the workers in particular, feel safer working with people from their part of the country.

Fights often break out over disputes, but usually among the workers. They regard this as the only way to settle a dispute, having little or no recourse to the law. Reprisals against bosses who have refused to pay up are rare.

It is unjust

“Everyone knows that Beijingers dislike us. They always complain about how dirty we are. But how are you supposed to stay clean on a building site. Beijingers should try working there themselves,” Guo says angrily.

There is a bridge in front of Guo's building site. In their spare time, builders will wash and change into clean clothes. Standing on the bridge, no-one notices them or looks at them, just because they don't look like mingong.

Most builders are young. Generally they leave for big cities seeking work after finishing at primary school. Those with high school diplomas are considered well educated.

Like a lot of the other workers, Guo Tao wanted to get out of his village, see the outer world and broaden his mind. But there's little time for that if you're working 13 to 14 hours everyday. There are no newspapers, radios or TV sets provided on building sites. Builders either smoke or play cards.

Guo Tao doesn't smoke. “I like to go out and see people in the street or find a lively restaurant. I look at the different people and wonder what difference there is between us.

“We have the same ideals in our childhood as people in Beijing, but we are not able to choose how to live.” Guo feels he is just a passenger in the city, staying for a few years, even though he has helped in building it. “We have no money or education so Beijing can't be our home.”



Photos by Aily



On Wu Zetian

Wu Zetian, China's only female ruler, has been portrayed many ways by historians and writers. How have you depicted her in your book?

In China, many historians and writers, especially some popular writers, have taken an outside view of Wu Zetian, leading them to prejudiced assessments. What I wanted to do was to take an inside look at the world through her eyes — the Tang Dynasty, China, religion, life and death, love and hate, cruelty and mercy. To maintain this, I wrote it as a fictional autobiography, in which the 'I' in the book is the empress.

So what do you think of the empress?

First off, Wu Zetian was a woman who was killed by men and by political power. All traces of her have been destroyed, and we don't even know her real name. But more recently, she has become a figure of great interest, creating a chance to bring her legend back to life. She was one of the greatest rulers in China's history, but because she was a woman, she was and is often looked down on and dismissed for less than she was.

What disturbs me more is the amount of historical mistakes in many books about her. For example, their descriptions of her dress represent Ming Dynasty-style clothes, not garb from the Tang. History and historical fiction writers have a responsibility to accurately portray periods of the past, but some just use Wu Zetian to express their own opinions. The problem is especially true with men writers, whose depictions show their unrealistic ideals of womanhood and base misogyny.

But how do you know that you have represented the way she truly thought?

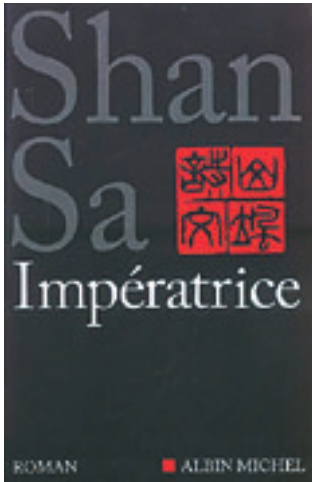
I have facts and hard evidence — mostly because I have maintained communication with her for several years. In mysterious ways that I don't understand, she steered me in creating this book. I think that it is possible for there to be dialog between the dead and the living. The main reason I wrote this book was to go beyond history and space, to pass those barriers — and I did, I saw her.

In a dream?

No, during the day, I actually saw her. She gave me a lot of help, but also brought much sorrow. We have a love-hate relationship.

Why does this woman mean so much to you?

I don't really know. I have had such feelings since I was



I have maintained communication with (Wu Zetian) for several years. In mysterious ways that I don't understand, she steered me in creating this book.

— Shan Sa

a child. When I was a teen in Beijing, I had feelings about her, but they were not clear. Those emotions got clearer when I was writing my first novel. I know she was there and near me. Her spirit is still flowing through the land of China and I am a part of that.

What do you think you and Wu Zetian have in common?

She was born in Chang'an, [the Tang capital near present-day Xi'an], but spent her childhood moving from place to place. She didn't return to Chang'an until she was 13. That's one thing we have in common, we both grew up without real roots. In fact, we pulled up our roots, but were still able to blossom, as our real roots are in our souls.

Also, when Wu Zetian first went to the palace as one of the emperor's wives, there were already thousands of beautiful women there. She was not the most beautiful, but still was able to stand out because of her talent and capability. I feel like I have done the same thing — I left China for France, like entering a strange and foreign palace. But in the end I too stood out and paved my own way to success.

On Writing

Are you a bestseller in France?

I think my situation is unusual, as my real focus is literary creation. I take my writing very seriously and don't do it to please the public. In fact, I find writing to be a generally bitter process. So then

Channeling an Empress

Novelist Shan Sa explores life and times of Tang ruler Wu Zetian in new novel

By Yu Shanshan

Author Shan Sa, née Yan Ni, was born in Beijing in 1972. She began writing poetry at the age of seven and by the time she was 17 had two poems and a book of essays published in China. In 1987, she was elected the youngest member of Beijing Writers' Association. She moved to Paris in 1990. There she spent two years in high school and another two years in a Christian college, where she majored in philosophy. She then worked as a secretary for famed painter Balthus in Switzerland for two

years. During that time, she began to write novels in French under the nom de plume Shan Sa.

Her first two novels, *Porte de la Paix Céleste* (The Door of Peaceful Heaven, 1997) and *Les Quatre Vies du Saule* (The Four Lives of the Willow, 1999), won her critical acclaim, but it was her third novel, *La Joueuse De Go* (The Girl Who Played Go), that made her famous and earned her the Prix Goncourt des Lyceens, France's most prestigious fiction prize, in October 2001. That novel has since been published in nearly 20 countries and translated into

English, Italian, Chinese and Japanese, and a film adaptation is underway.

Her new novel, *Impératrice* (Empress), published in France in August, is a fictional first-hand account of the life of Wu Zetian, the only woman ruler in Chinese history. She took command of the country during the Tang Dynasty over 1,000 years ago and lorded over a very prosperous period in this country's history.

Shan Sa now lives and writes in Paris. Two weeks ago, she gave an interview to *Beijing Today*.

why have I become a best-selling author? I suppose it is connected to my persistent pursuit of pure literature. I think that works that really try to seek beauty and distill the nature of the soul appeal to all readers, and those are the things I stick to. Novels should not be written for just a certain group. To use a Chinese term, I write for "the people". I hope that my books can be accepted by people from different cultures, statuses and languages.

What's the purpose of your writing?

My first goal is to write good novels. Another more realistic goal is to make a living on writing books, though that, of course, is very challenging whether in France or in China. But I knew from the beginning, even before I started putting pen to paper, that my writing would be enough to take care of me.

Were your early works based on personal experience?

Definitely. My first novel, *Porte de la paix céleste* (The Door of Peaceful Heaven), indirectly tells about my first love affair at age 16. It's also based on when I broke out of a depression after moving to France, when I missed my home, my family and my first boyfriend. It tells a couple love stories that take place in Beijing and revolves around a lost diary.

I used the same themes of impossible love and repressed passion in my second and third novels. I wouldn't say all of these books are completely memoirs of my first love, they are just shadowy reflections. But one thing is true — I have personally experienced the emotions felt by the different characters in my books, so to some extent you could say all my characters are me.

What are your habits when you write?

When I'm writing...I look really bad. I won't brush my hair or wash my face for a whole day and write in bed in half darkness. I can write through an entire night, even though I know that's not good

for my health. When I'm writing, my mood gets low and I have to force myself to go outside or make some calls, or else I will have no communication with the outside world.

For me, the creation of every book is like a dramatic love affair. There are all kinds of men in my life, but finally I have found I only love one. The same is true for writing. You can work with several motifs or themes, but in the end, most of them are false. During the writing process, the false things fade, leaving only the real love remaining.

On spiritual home

In your deepest heart, which do you consider home, Beijing or Paris?

Paris helped me learn to be a real woman, and Beijing is a part of my body. But neither one is my true home. That would have to be Xi'an. Every time I go to Xi'an, it feels like going

home. It's amazing. In 1999, I went there for the first time in my life, and as the plane was landing and I looked through the fog over the loess plateau, I felt like I had returned to the real China.

What are your goals?

For now, my goal is to be a better writer and create better novels. *Impératrice* is a great leap in my writing career. When I was writing *Impératrice*, I was thinking about giving up as a writer once it was finished, because it took so much out of me. I was exhausted. But the day

it was done, I realized this book changed my life. Now I feel that I can call on my spirit to write a much grander work over the next ten years — a book that may be my life work.

Do you have any ideas for your next book?

I'm still looking for the right feeling. I want to try something different, for I was reborn after *Impératrice*. This time, I want to write about people of modern times, about their lives, desires, troubles and opinions about life, love and death. But I don't have a story. I'm still digging for that.



Shan Sa

Photo by Liu Yongmei

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Director Kresimir Dolencic explains the finer points of being an extra in a cast of thousands

Photo by Huang Liang

First Rehearsal for *Aida* Extras

By Dong Nan

The first rehearsal for an international production of Verdi's *Aida*, to be staged in Beijing later this month, was held on the sports ground of a local school on August 23.

The rehearsal involved over 300 local people, who will be among the over 2,000 extras appearing in the production. It involved a scene at the royal palace, in which messengers report news from the war to the Pharaoh, triumphant soldiers return, and guards present the bodies of martyrs.

Overseen by director Kresimir Dolencic, artistic director of

the Croatian National Theatre, and executive director Liu Keqing, 180 students from Beijing Vocational Senior High School were grouped as Egyptian soldiers, maids-in-waiting and guardians of the Pharaoh's palace, while more than 120 volunteers from amateur choral societies marched in a procession of commoners.

"Imagine you are watching the triumphant soldiers of our People's Liberation Army. Look! The guy leading the troops is the son of your neighbor, or your cousin, you are very proud of him!" shouted Liu Keqing to the "ancient Egyptians."

Dolencic tried to explain to a group of "mortally wounded soldiers" how to "die" properly. When words and gestures fail to convey his meaning, the director gave a demonstration, stretching himself out on the ground, to the crowd's obvious amazement.

"I am delighted to participate in such an activity, one of the 'corpses' told *Beijing Today*, "it is a feast of arts." This extra also confessed that he had never seen the opera or heard the music before, but was familiar with the basic plot.

"Though many of them are not familiar with the music, they are

doing their best, and I know they are happy with that," Dolencic said at a press conference following the rehearsal, "I am satisfied with everything so far."

"Many modern techniques will be adopted for the production," added Liu Keqing, and we will also use some Peking Opera and acrobatic performances. And inspired by the popular Chinese romance, *The Butterfly Lovers*, after the death of the hero and heroine, thousands of birds and butterflies will fly around the stage, to eulogize true love and peace."

Aida will be staged on September 27 at Workers' Stadium.

Rock Review



Tian yuan

Seventeen-year-old Tian Yuan took the Chinese rock 'n' roll scene by storm in 2002 with the release of her debut album *A Wishful Day*, backed by her band Hopscotch.

All the songs are in English, which has helped the album gain a much wider in-

Hopscotch

ternational audience than most Chinese bands ever attain.

"A mesmerizing lyrical and vocal concoction of Chan Marshall's bitter mantras and Hope Sandoval's sweet meanderings, married to a musical accompaniment that would fit right in with PJ Harvey's upbeat swagger and ghostly doldrums," commented Nebraska DJ Justin



Grotelueschen on Tian's music.

The soulful and mature voice belies Tian's real age. Marcel Theroux, TV presenter for BBC's Channel 4, said, "I thought it was very

moving and sensitive. I was very surprised she was so young, but had a kind of mature sadness."

Tian describes the process of writing lyrics as "swimming in music I have heard ... I choked, then spat out the let-

ters onto the paper."

Line up:

Vocal: Tian Yuan

Guitar/Arrangement: Li Tao and Liu Limin

A Wishful Day (2002)

Recommendations: *A Wishful Day*, *A Faker*, *She*, *Fragile Inside*

Huabiao Film Awards Announced

The highest honors for the Chinese movie industry were handed out last Saturday at the ninth Huabiao Film Awards.

Zhang Yimou's *Hero* won a Special Contribution Award, the first such award in the history of the Huabiao Awards. The award was presented to Zhang by another renowned director, Chen Kaige.

Jiang Tao Hai Lang (Stormy Waves), telling the story of Chinese soldiers and ordinary people battling the disastrous flood of 1998 won the prize for Best Film, its director, Zhai Junjie, won Best Director award, and leading actor Pan Yueming won Best Newcomer award, for his role Zhang Chengwen, a young soldier.

Hollywood fantasy *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, which screened last year, won the award for Best Dubbed Foreign Film.

The Best Actor award was shared by Liu Peiqi, who stars in *He Ni Zai Yi Qi (To Be with You)*, and Lu Qi, who stars in *Deng Xiaoping*.

TV program hostess Ni Ping, who stars in *Meili De Da Jiao (Beautiful Feet)* and Huang Suying in *Shijie Shang Zui Ai Wode Nage Ren Zoule (The One Who Love Me Has Gone)* shared the award for Best Actress.

Photos by Wang Zhenlong



Chen Kaige



Zhang Yimou

Swan Lake all Autumn

By Nebula Dong

Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake* is a perennial favorite in Beijing. Ballet lovers always greet new (and old) versions by various troupes with unabated enthusiasm. This autumn not one, but three productions of the classic are to be staged here.

The first, by the Buryat State Academic Opera and Ballet House, is on September 19 and 20 at Tianqiao Theater. Founded in 1939, it is still the only opera and ballet company in the Far East and Eastern Siberia.

After the performance in Beijing, the troupe will continue its China tour in Shanghai, Nanjing and Guangzhou.

The Pushkin Ballet, another

time-honored Russian ballet troupe with an all-star cast, will mount its production of *Swan Lake* on September 25, at the Beijing Exhibition Hall Theater. After three nights of *Swan Lake*, the company will premiere its version of *Notre Dame de Paris* in Beijing.

And in the middle of next month, the Matuyama Ballet will present a Japanese version of *Swan Lake* at the Tianqiao Theater. This production features extravagant costumes and stage design.



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Film Figures

By Dong Nan

Movie buffs that want a more hands-on experience with their favorite films should check out the Film Toy Store on the fourth floor of the UME International Cineplex across from Shuang'an Plaza at the Northwest corner of the Third Ring Road. The walls of the small store are lined with dozens of plastic and resin-based figurines of characters from popular flicks.

Not surprisingly, many of the items draw from the films that nearly single-handedly started the worldwide movie marketing craze, *Star Wars*. Devotees of those films can choose from figures of Imperial storm troopers or menacing versions of Darth Vader, as well as the store's most expensive item, a limited-edition storm trooper mask that sells for 1,880 yuan.

Most of the figurines have sci-fi origins, such as mini versions of *The Hulk*, Arnold Schwarzenegger from the *Terminator* series and Keanu Reeves from *The Matrix*. A few of these items are even able to speak a few famed lines from their movies. Prices vary greatly, from just 20 yuan to nearly 2,000 yuan.

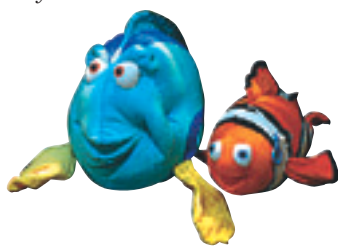
Fans of classic movies will be attracted by the "Silent Screamer" series of



Figurines from *Infernal Affairs*, 120 yuan

figurines based on great early horror flicks and sci-fi, such as *Frankenstein* (1910), *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1920) and *Metropolis* (1926). These spooky items go for 260 yuan each.

Even scarier are figures from popular gothic horror comic and film *Spawn*, available in a set of six for 2,000 yuan, and twisted "Tortured Souls" (from 40 to 1,000 yuan) toys from



Stuffed fish from *Finding Nemo*, 40-50 yuan

the sick mind of author and filmmaker Clive Barker. Recent hits are not ignored, as the store also

offers costumes and magic items from the *Harry Potter* films, rings from the *Lord of the Rings* and a sweater just like that Freddy Kreuger wears in the *Nightmare on Elm Street* films. Fans of Hong Kong movies can check out a set of miniatures of the six main characters of the smash hit *Wu Jian Dao* (*Infernal Affairs*), including tiny Andy Lau and Tony Liang figures, that goes for a

total of 120 yuan.

These days, the hot sellers are items based on animated hit *Finding Nemo*, such as stuffed fish toys (40 to 50 yuan each), key rings (10 yuan) and puzzles (20 yuan).

Where: Fourth floor of UME International Complex (Huaxing Guoji Yingcheng), 44 Shuangyushu Kexueyuan, Haidian **Open:** 1:00 pm - 9:00 pm

Photos by Txtpuma

Fun for Sale

By Yu Shanshan

Toysmart, the first toy retail chain in China, opened its flagship store on the first basement level of Xindong'an Market in Wangfujing in January. Since then, it has drawn swarms of customers shopping for big named foreign toys such as Legos and Barbie dolls as well as more obscure, domestically-made playthings.

Sure to delight people young and old are new toys that employ sophisticated artificial intelligence to make them seem alive. The Poo-chi dog (99 yuan) becomes excited when you place a special electronic bone in

Talking hen and chick, 199 yuan

front of him, while the Duke Robot (99 yuan) laughs when you scratch his feet and Furby babies (299 yuan) can play peek-a-boo.

The store also stocks a range of simpler, wood-based toys that have a classic feel, such as inexpensive wood chess sets from toy maker Taote (29-39 yuan) and a magic square (39 yuan) made up of 27 square blocks tied together with thin plastic line that players try to fold into a cube.

A more challenging wooden toy is Jenga Ultimate (188 yuan), a colored version of the classic

three-person wood block construction game that is popular in bars in this country. First, the blocks are put together to create a tall tower, and then players take turns removing one block at a time according to color. The winner is the last person to remove a block without causing the tower to crumble.

Among the more expensive items in the store the several radio controlled planes and cars. The Golden Eagle II XL plane (790 yuan) is realistic-looking and fun, as is the 1:10 scale "Speed X" car (458 yuan), perfect for remote controlled racing.

Where: No. 143-145, B1, Xindong'an Market, No. 138 Wangfujing Street **Open:** 9 am - 10 pm **Tel:** 6528 1893

Photos by Wang Wei



Magic square, 39 yuan

and a few radio-controlled versions. Most available models are of foreign brand cars, such as Audis and Ferraris, but there are a few Chinese makes, like Hongqi, to be found.

Where: Lufthansa Center, No. 52, Liangmaqiao Road, Chaoyang **Open:** 9 am - 10 pm **Tel:** 6465 1188

Playing Smart

By Chen Si

The toys at the Touda Shop in the China World Shopping Mall are not only fun, they can make you smarter. The store stocks a large line of attractive, brain-teasing games intended for children over seven and even adults, though these creative intelligence boosters come at a price.

One interesting item is "Memory Game" (129 yuan), a set made up of a board, a colored die and 25 pieces intended to improve memory skills. The pieces look the same on top, but



Labyrinth, 289 yuan

Photos by Txtpuma



Black and White Chess, 99 yuan

their bases come in six different colors. When put into the holes on the board, the bases of the pieces cannot be seen, so the challenge of the game is to role the die, then try to find a piece with a base of a given color.

Another competitive mind-bender is the two-player "black and white chess" (99 yuan), better known to Western audiences as the classic game "Othello". This simple looking but deceptively intricate game is played on a simple board with pieces that are black on one side and white on the other. Players get one color and then compete to make their color the

dominant force on the board.

Among the one-player games available is "Labyrinth" (289 yuan), a test of both mental ability and man-eye coordination. The game is like a three-dimensional maze with two handles on its sides. A ball is put among the walls, and players can use the handles to tilt the board to get the ball to roll. The goal of the game is to carefully work the ball into one of the small holes in difficult corners of the board.

Where: NB138A, China World Shopping Mall, Chaoyang **Open:** 9:00 am - 9:00 pm **Tel:** 6505 4548



Memory Game, 129 yuan

Model Heaven

By Shan Jinliang

Toy City in the Lufthansa Center is probably the best place to shop for young and older collectors of model vehicles. On offer is a wide range of mini vehicles of all kinds, sure to satisfy the kid in any adult.

This store is one of the few places in town to buy model trains, like the cool electric model displayed right inside the door. The store stocks a huge range of trains, including engine cars and cabooses, from the US, the UK and Germany. The German train components tend to be the most expensive, with a single engine car going for around 2,000 yuan, but high-quality track is available at only around 50 yuan per link.

Glider and helicopter models are the priciest items available, going for as much as 13,800 yuan for a Japanese import. High-quality military vehicle and soldier models are far more reasonable, as are mini yachts and other boats.

The store's shelves are dominated by cars, including collectible Japanese-made models of Honda, Porsche, Dodge and Volkswagen cars



Photo by Che Qingjiu

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Lamb-o-Rama

The food of China's northern horse masters

By Xiao Rong

Mongolian cuisine seems to have an unfair reputation as being unrefined and unremarkable. While it is not one of the eight major schools of Chinese cooking, Mongolian fare in fact has a lot to offer, its simple cooking methods, especially roasting, often bringing out wonderful flavor from simple main ingredients such as mutton, dairy and wheat-based products. Mongolian cooking is believed to have been influenced by Shandong cuisine, as shown by its refined cutting skills and crisp textures

and flavors.

Arguably the most famous Mongolian dish is whole roast lamb (*kao quan yang*), traditionally made when Mongolians entertain honored guests or hold grand ceremonies. Selected sheep weighing about 20 kilograms with plenty of fat are slow roasted to create this tasty, massive meat-fest.

Other dishes make use of lamb legs, backs and tails. Lamb leg (*kao yangtui*) roasted with onion and celery is especially delicious, normally served sliced thin with a side of scallions and

pancakes for rolling.

Lamb back (*kao yangbei*) is considered a real delicacy and served at major events such as sacrifices, marriages, elders' birthday celebrations and family reunions. To make the dish, a whole sheep is cut into seven parts and boiled with salt, after which it is served on a big plate in a crouching position. Diners then cut a slice of fat from the tail along with strips of meat from other parts of the sheep.

Aside from meat, Mongolians also have a taste for dairy products, such as milk tea, yogurt, cream and

even a bitter alcohol made from fermented mares' milk (definitely an acquired taste). *Zhuan cha*, salty milk tea, is an indispensable drink for herdsman, for whom "three milk teas and one meal a day" is regular practice.

Among the staple foods in Mongolian fare worth mentioning is a special kind of fried rice called *chao mi*, that along with a cup of milk tea is the most common breakfast for herdsman and nomads. This rice is cooked in a series of steps, first steamed, then stir-fried and finally ground and mixed with yogurt and sugar.



Passage to Cool at the Pass By Bar

By Joel Kirkhart

One step inside the Pass By Bar is all it takes to slip away into a quiet, cool world of drink-inspired deep conversations, quiet romantic moments, and dreams of sights far, far away. This bar is a great place for a night out or a quiet, reflective afternoon and draws an interesting, mixed clientele.

Time has been kind to the Pass By and its founders, a group of hard-core travel junkies. Over the past couple years, the bar has managed to smoothly transform from a small neighborhood watering hole with a distinct travel theme into a larger, more sophisticated joint thankfully with the travel vibe still in place. It occupies a courtyard on a charming historic *hutong* and features a comfortable outdoor seating area surrounded by rooms of various sizes that all benefit from huge windows and sky lights. The main room houses the bar, along with a sizeable library of borrowable books and a cozy loft area.

The drink menu includes all the standard cocktails, plus a few house specials, most going for 30 yuan each, as well as mugs of Yanjing draft beer for 15 yuan. Customers in more abstaining moods can choose from a selection of smooth coffees, brewed tea

and milk teas, around 25 yuan a cup.

The Pass By has also ventured into rare air by foregoing standard pub grub for a more interesting, classy menu. The bar has long made good pizza, with a thin, pastry-like crust and plenty of cheese and toppings ranging from vegetarian to the "Beijing hutong" pizza, made with chunks of lamb and spices. The pasta selections were added this year, and while they garner no points for authenticity, they are still miles ahead of the greasy food at most Beijing bars. The tortellini di pollo (chicken tortellini with tomato-cream sauce and spinach, 30 yuan) and lasagna due gusto (lasagna with mushrooms, 35 yuan) are tasty but very heavy and served in gut-busting portions. Diners out to really treat themselves can check out the US Angus sirloin steak (88 yuan) or grilled salmon (78 yuan).

Overall, The Pass By is one of the best bars in the city, a somewhat hidden treasure definitely worth tracking down for a drink, a meal or just a time out from the hustle of downtown Beijing.

Where: 108 Nanluogu Xiang, Dongcheng
Tel: 8403 8004
Open: 11 am - 2:30 am

Home Cooking with Ms. Zhao

By Xiao Rong

In this new occasional column, *Beijing Today's* own in-house master of Chinese cuisine Zhao Hong introduces dishes that are easy and fun to make at home with delicious results.

Taiyang Rou - Sunny-Side Up Casserole

This colorful dish makes a great meal any time of year. The ingredients can be adjusted to suit different tastes, but be sure to use crisp vegetables that can hold up to steaming and avoid leafy greens - they will turn soft and bitter.

Ingredients:

250 grams fresh ground meat (pork, mutton or beef are all fine)
1 or 2 water chestnuts, diced
1 fresh mushroom, diced
1 carrot, diced
1 red chili and 1 green chili, diced
1 egg
1 tablespoon minced fresh shallots
1 tablespoon minced fresh ginger
dash of sesame oil
dash of soy sauce
salt to taste



Procedure:

Combine the ground meat with the minced shallots and ginger in a salad bowl. Then add the sesame oil (can substitute peanut oil), soy sauce and salt and combine to form a paste. Let meat mixture sit for about 30 minutes for flavors to meld.

When meat is ready, put the diced vegetables into a medium sized bowl. Then spread the meat mixture evenly over the vegetables, or they can be combined together.

In the trickiest part of the recipe, crack the egg directly into the bowl without breaking the yolk.

Steam the dish in said bowl for 10 minutes. Top with some diced chili peppers or tomatoes. This dish can also be cooked in a microwave oven, but turns out better when steamed.

Culture and Food Dahr Khan Mongolian Bar and Restaurant

By Zhao Pu

The Dahr Khan Mongolian Culture Bar and Restaurant is hard to miss on the bar street behind the Friendship store thanks to the white Mongolian tent and huge wood wheel outside its door.

"This is a restaurant during the day and a cultural bar at night," says manager Ren Ping. "Every detail of our restaurant has been designed to make Mongolian friends feel at home and non-Mongolians feel like they are on a trip to Mongolia, where they can get a taste of the region's food, dance, music and lifestyle."

The interior is crammed with cart wheels, saddles, musical instruments, traditional costumes and cowhide maps from Inner Mongolia, and even the lights were designed to resemble Mongolian lanterns. The food is just as authentic, as the chefs and waitstaff all hail from Inner Mongolia and many materials are shipped in from China's northern grasslands.

Like other Mongolian restaurants around town, the top dish on the menu is whole roast lamb (*kao quan yang*, 1,288 yuan). Dahr Khan's version is made from lambs from the Xilingele Grassland in Inner Mongolia that are marinated in 28 secret herbs and spices before being roasted three to four hours until succulent and golden brown.

Other mutton-based specials include the popular Mongolian pancake with mutton floss (*baobing yangrousong*, 46 yuan), and Xilingele stewed mutton (*Shou pa rou*, 38 yuan). That dish is made by soaking mutton in cold water for several hours, then slowly stewing it with herbs and condiments until it is tender and nicely fragrant.

One corner of the restaurant is devoted to cultural exchange and often features new works by young Mongolian artists. Management regularly organizes parties and events on weekends and Mongolian festivals, making it a ideal place for an easy, imaginary trip to the mythic steppe home of the Mongolian people.

Where: Jianwai Xiushui Nanjie Jiubajie **Tel:** 6501 7740 **Open:** 11am - midnight **Price:** 90 yuan per person

Mucho Mongolian at Huhe Restaurant

By Sun Ming

Unlike in the West, where mutton suffers a perhaps unfair negative reputation, sheep meat has long been considered a delicacy in China, particularly by the nomadic Mongolian people.

One place to go to munch on mutton at its finest is the Huhe Restaurant inside the Inner Mongolia Hotel behind the China National Art Museum.

"All the mutton we serve comes from one-year-old lambs from western Inner Mongolia," says manager Lian Runkai. "We have a loyal following of both Beijingers and people from Inner Mongolia in this city."

One popular, if expensive, house special is roast lamb back (*kao yangbei*, 468 yuan). Before roasting, the enormous cut of meat is covered with tomatoes and celery, giving it rich flavor.

Daring diners can miss the mutton and tuck into plates of camel humps and hoofs. Sliced camel hump (*yuan bao tuofeng*, 48 yuan) and camel hoof (*tuozhang*, 280 yuan each) are nutritious and high in protein but low in fat.

Oats from Inner Mongolia's Wuchuan County are reputed as among the best in the country. The Huhe Restaurant offers several kinds of noodles, called *youmian*, and even dumplings made from these oats.

Youmian wowo (15 yuan each dish) is an unusual way to get one's oats, a steamer full of wide noodle rings that

looks like a hornet's nest. Diners tear off a few noodles and then dip the bland rings into a bowl of lamb meat soup (15 yuan per bowl) to add taste and texture.

Where: Meishuguan Houjie, behind the China National Art Museum **Tel:** 6401 4499

Open: 7:30 am - 9 pm
Price: 100 yuan per person

Meaty Buffet at Tengelitala Restaurant

By Lu Junying

The lyrical name of the Tengelitala Restaurant translates literally to "grassland in the sky", and while its location near Wanshou Road means it is far from any real prairie, this restaurant has the food and feel of the Mongolian steppe.

Manager Qiao Yuqing told *Beijing Today* that almost all the main ingredients used are directly shipped in from Inner Mongolia. Native mutton is the centerpiece of the house's top specialty, whole roast lamb (*kao quan yang*, 1,080 yuan). For this delectable meat marathon, the sheep is first marinated for two hours and then roasted for four, and comes out brown, fragrant and large enough to feed 16 people. Three dipping sauces come alongside and the wait staff performs a traditional Mongolian blessing to tables bold enough to order this huge dish.

Smaller barbecued items also come highly recommended, such as the *wangye kaorou* (118 yuan), slices of fresh roasted meat with a spicy dipping sauce, and poached mutton, (*caoyuan shou pa rou*, 68 yuan) in which a cut of good meat is steamed with some fresh ginger and shallots with tender, tasty results.

The restaurant's second floor houses a buffet with an extensive range of offerings that highlights Mongolian fare but also includes some Japanese and Western foods. Lunch goes for 88 yuan per person and includes access to a song and dance performance at

noon, while the more elaborate dinner costs 216 yuan per head and allows diners to enjoy an extended Mongolian folk dance review.

A more economical but still tasty offering is milk tea with fried rice (*ruxiang piao chaomi*, 6 yuan), a secret combination of rice steeped in milk and tea that has a pleasant sweet and salty flavor.

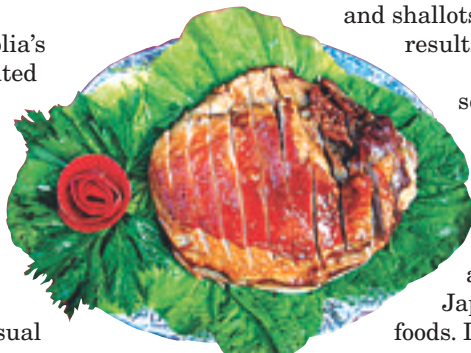
Where: No.2 Wanshou Road, Haidian **Tel:** 6815 0808
Open: 10 am - 9 pm
Price: around 100-250 yuan per person



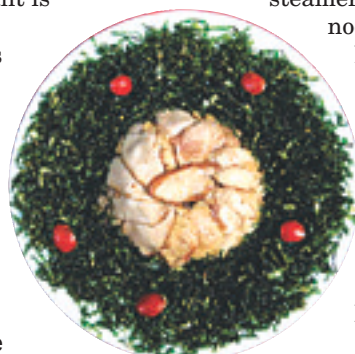
Kao quan yang, 1080 yuan



Baobing yangrousong, 46 yuan



Kao yangpai, 48 yuan



Grassland tuozhang, 288 yuan

Signs of Life

This solo exhibition brings together the works of award winning South Korean artist Moon Bong-sun.

Where: Soka Art Center, 107 Dongsì Beidajie, Dongcheng District
When: till September 20, 10 am - 9 pm (closed Mondays)
Admission: free Tel: 8401 2377

Exhibitions

Modern Sculpture from Chile

Sergio Castillo's metallic works of art have been installed in public spaces all around the world, including *Free At Last*, a flock of 50 doves rising in unison, dedicated to the memory of civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. This exhibition features several of his smaller works.

Where: Green T. House 6 Gongti Xilu, Chaoyang **When:** Daily 10:30 am - 11:30 pm, till September 8 **Tel:** 6552 8310 **Admission:** free
Coalminers: Song Chao



By the age of 24, this amateur photographer had toiled in the coalmines of Shandong for six years. He found a mentor in Beijing photographer Hei Ming and mastered the use of the camera. He snaps portraits of his work mates as they emerge from the sooty mines.

Where: 798 Photo

Gallery 4 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Dashanzi Art District **When:** Tuesday-Sunday 10 am - 6:30 pm, till September 11 **Admission:** free **Tel:** 6438 1784

Ecology and Order

Wei Ye and Yang Ping create works that seek to raise ecological awareness. Wei paints scenes of beautiful sunflowers lying tragically amongst bleak industrial waste. Yang uses white plastic bags — a product of consumerism that she feels is “suffocating” the Green Movement.

Where: Yan Club Art Center, 4 Jiuxianqiao Lu (behind Hongyuan Apartments), Dashanzi Art District **When:** Daily 10 am - 8 pm till September 14 **Admission:** free **Tel:** 8457 3506

Hans Van Dijk Polaroids

A rather spooky posthumous exhibition of Polaroid photographs, taken by artist Hans van Dijk, who joined with artist Ai Weiwei and Frank Uytterhaegen in 1999 to set up the loft-gallery CAAW in Beigao. Van Dijk's work has been shown in various galleries in his native Holland and abroad. These photos were found in his apartment after he passed away last year.

Where: China Art Archives and Warehouse, opposite the Nangao Police Station, Caochang Dicun, Jichang Fulu **When:** Wednesday - Sunday 1 pm - 6 pm, September 6 to 30 **Admission:** free **Tel:** 8456 5152

Antiquity and Modern Fashion



Li Mingzhu's oil paintings depict his own conception and recreations of antique Chinese porcelains and old style furniture, which he combines with the *Little Red*

Book of Mao Zedong's sayings and Mao buttons of the Cultural Revolution. Employing brilliant reds, oranges, blues and whites, he merges the birds, landscapes and poet-scholars of traditional Chinese porcelains seamlessly into his paintings.

Where: Qin Gallery, Hua Wei Li 1-1E, North of Beijing Curio City **When:** till September 25, daily 9:30 am - 6 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 8779 0461

Dunhuang Oils: Cheng Tianliang

Cheng, a 40-year professional oil painter from Shanxi, takes his inspiration from the Mogao Grottoes. His style is a blend of traditional Eastern practice and his own personal technique.

Where: Yun Zhou Gallery, Kempinski Hotel, 50 Liangmaqiao Lu **When:** September 8 - 28, daily 10 am - 9 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 6465 3388 ext 5735

Music



Jeff Chang

Thirty-six-year-old pop singer Jeff Chang (Zhang Xinzhe) takes the stage at the Workers' Stadium. Known as the “Prince of Love Songs”, Chang will demonstrate his royal touch with such songs as *Kuanrong* (Tolerance), *Yong Qing* (Deep Love), and *Fangshou* (Let Go).

Where: Worker's Stadium, Gongti Beilu **When:** September 5, 7:30 pm, **Admission:** 50-280 yuan **Tel:** 13911131344



Zhao Chuan

Pop star Chief Zhao (Zhao Chuan) is probably best known for his song, *Wo hen chou, keshi wo hen wenrou* (I'm Ugly, But I'm Sensitive). Other favorites include, *Wo shi yizhi xiaoxiao niao* (I am a Little Bird), and *Wo zhongyu shiqule ni* (I Lost You).

Where: Capital Gymnasium, 54 Baishiqiao Lu **When:** September 5, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 280-880 yuan. **Tel:** 8008101887

A Silk Road Journey: Vienna Boys' Choir

One of the world's most renowned choirs, with a history of 500 years, brings its angelic brand of music to Beijing. Directed by Rebecca Scheiner.

Where: Poly Theater, 14 Dongzhimen Nandajie **When:** September 12, 13 7:30 pm **Admission:** 180-680 yuan **Tel:** 6554 6666

Free Lectures (in English) on
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Stage



Wo de Yeman Nuyou (My Sassy Girl)

Adapted from the movie *My Sassy Girl*, this drama, about a guy's relationship with a wild girl, is a Chinese and South Korean co-production. Directed by Luan Yuanhui and produced by Li Yihan from South Korea.

Where: Beijing North Theatre, Bei Bingmashi Hutong, 67 Jiaodaokou Nan Dajie

When: September 6, 7, 7:30 pm, matinee on Sep 6, 2 pm. **Admission:** 80-180 yuan **Tel:** 6404 8021

Cuihua, shangsuancai



Named after Xue Cun's popular Dongbei ditty *Cuihua, Give Me Some Pickled Cabbage*, this long-running presentation by the graduation students

of the Central Academy of Drama, concerns a lonely man who seeks romance online in a chat room and ends up with two male roommates. Suancai (Jiang Shanshan) is the object of their affections. Directed by Liu Yan.

Where: Central Academy of Drama Theatre, 39 Dongmianhua Hutong **When:** September 5, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 80-240 yuan **Tel:** 8408 5506

Beijing Opera: Lushui Yishan (The Lu Water along Yi Mountain)

Director Gao Rukun explores new methods of combining traditional opera with dance.

Where: Poly Theater, 14 Dongzhimen Nandajie **When:** September 5-7, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 120-680 yuan **Tel:** 6506 5345

Modern Dance: Chuang, Xi (Bed, Drama)

Choreographed by and starring Li Hanzhong and Ma Bo, the stage is filled with beds. The performance takes place on these beds, which represent the different stages of life, and the choreographer's attitude towards marriage.

Where: Beijing Modern Dance Company Theatre, 8 Majiapu Dongli (inside Beijing Xixiao) **When:** September 6 and 7, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 20, 40 yuan **Tel:** 6757 3879

Jams

New music

Modern Sky presents a line up of its star performers this evening, featuring PK-14, one of the best underground post-punk bands in China, Shengyin Cuipian (Sound Fragrant), Shazi (Sand), Luotuo (Camel), and Subs.

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By Dong Nan

Where: Get Lucky Bar, 500 meters east of the south gate of the Univrsity of International Business and Economics, Chaoyang **When:** September 6, 9:30 pm **Admission:** 30 yuan **Tel:** 6420 9109

Indian Music and Dance

Tonight Vibes is going Indian, and bringing partygoers a night of Bhangra and Bollywood music, currently the cool-

est thing on the London scene. Traditional Indian dancers and other surprises spice things up. Featuring DJs Huang Wei Wei and Holyman. Access limited to 300 people.

Where: Vibes, 4 Jiuxianqiao Lu (just north of Beijing Tokyo Art Projects) Dashanzi **When:** September 6 10 pm **Admission:** 30 yuan **Tel:** 6437 8082

Movies

On the Beat

Part fiction, part documentary, this film, directed by Ning Ying, uses all non-professional actors playing themselves in a portrayal of the life of an average street cop in Beijing. Winner of the Fipresci Prize in recognition of its originality at the San Sebastian International Film Festival. Chinese with English subtitles.

Where: Cherry Lane Movie, Fountain Terrace, Hilton Hotel, 1 Dongfang Lu,

Dongsanhuan Beilu **When:** September 5 8:30 pm **Admission:** 50 yuan, includes a drink **Tel:** 13901134745

Winter at 3,000 Metres

Cong Guan, a little girl of the Qiang nationality, the oldest ethnic minority in China, lives with her family in a village high up in the mountains. Produced and directed by Leng Shan. Shown with Chinese subtitles.

Where: Space for Imagination, 5 Xiwangzhuang, Haidian **When:** September 6, 7 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 6279 1280



Wu Jian Dao (Infernal Affairs)

Directed by Andrew Lau and Alan Mak, *Infernal Affairs* is a tense thriller featuring Hong Kong superstars Andy Lau and Tony Leung. The story follows the parallel lives of Ming (Lau), a cop who secretly reports to ruthless Triad crime boss Sam (Eric Tsang); and Yan (Leung), an undercover police officer who poses as a Triad member in Sam's gang (Chinese only).

Where: UME International Cineplex (Huaxing Guoji Yingcheng), 44 Shangyushu Kexueyuan, Haidian **When:** from September 5 **Admission:** 50 yuan **Tel:** 6261 2851



Zhenzhu Lake

Photo by Zhao Wenbo

Get in the Car and Drive!



Cuandixia



Miyun Reservoir



Jiankou Great Wall



Big Karst Cave



Shidu

By Zhao Pu / Zhang Huan

Autumn is the best season for a driving holiday, either in the countryside around Beijing, or further afield. Temperatures in the mountains are already cool enough in September to turn the leaves to brilliant shades of yellow and red.

Some of the scenic spots in the outer districts of Beijing make ideal weekend getaways, and with the week-long National Day holiday coming up, slightly more distant destinations are also options. Following are ten top recommendations for autumn driving tours to the countryside around Beijing and beyond.

Cuandixia – Ling Mountain – Zhenzhu Lake (爨底下村 – 灵山 – 珍珠湖) (Mentougou District)

The first stop along this route is the village of Cuandixia, where over 70 courtyard houses dating back to the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties still stand. Due largely to the village's isolation up until recent times, the houses are still in relatively good condition. A little further on is Ling Shan (Mountain). Rising over two thousand meters above sea level, it is the highest mountain in Beijing Municipality, and is famous for its plateau grassland. The last stop along this route is Zhenzhu Lake. The lake is nine kilometers long, and its banks are covered with colorful wild flowers.

Tips: Visitors can spend a night (120 yuan) in an old house at Cuandixia. Call 6981 6574 to make a reservation.

Miyun Reservoir – Simatai Great Wall – Wuling Mountain (密云水库 – 司马台长城 – 雾灵山) (Miyun County)

Simatai Great Wall is the steepest and most difficult to climb section of Great Wall in Beijing Municipality. It is also the only well preserved unrestored section of wall dating back to the Ming Dynasty. Wuling Mountain is a forest park with overnight accommodation available in the form of mountain cabins.

Beside Miyun Reservoir, along State Highway 101, there are a number of small restaurants where guests can sit on a balcony overlooking the lake while enjoying fresh fish and shrimp.

Tips: The wind is strong at the summit of Wuling Mountain, so bring something warm if you are planning on getting up to watch the sunrise. Overcoats can be also rented on the top of the mountain.

The cabins at the top of Wuling Mountain offer a romantic atmosphere and reasonably good food (150 yuan per person). Call 0314-5510008

for reservations.

Hongluo Temple – Jiankou Great Wall – Yanxi Lake (红螺寺 – 箭扣长城 – 雁栖湖) (Huairou County)

Hongluo Temple, 50 kilometers from Beijing, has a history of about one thousand years. The mountain behind the temple is ablaze in red maple leaves at this time of year, and with the added attraction of the Jiankou section of Great Wall, it is a popular destination for photographers and hikers. On the way to Jiankou is a country-style guesthouse and bar, named Mountain Bar, which is often crowded with people meeting for a drink and chat. There is an amusement park at Yanxi Lake offering various aquatic activities.

Tips: The Jiankou section of Great Wall is a protected area. Climbing is not permitted. Zhao's Guesthouse (160 yuan per person) is the best known place to stay here. Call 6161 1762 for reservations.

Jinhai Lake the Big Karst Cave – the Great Canyon(金海湖 – 大溶洞 – 大峡谷) (Pinggu County)

Jinhai Lake, 90 kilometers northeast of Beijing, offers a wide variety of water-park amusement activities. The Great Canyon, 12 kilometers northeast of Pinggu is three kilometers long. It is also known as the Canyon of Five-Dragon Lake. The Big Karst Cave, has a waterway of 100 meters.

Tips: There are villas available for rent by Jinhai Lake. Call the Jinhai Hotel (6999 2789) or Blue Sea Mountain Villa (6999 1171) for more information (approx 150 yuan per person).

Jietai Temple – Tanzhe Temple – Stone Flower Cave – Yunju Temple - Shidu (戒台寺 – 潭柘寺 – 石花洞 – 云居寺 – 十渡) (Fangshan District)

Jietai Temple, only five kilometers from Tanzhe Temple, dates back to the Tang Dynasty (618-907). Tanzhe Temple was originally built during the Jin Dynasty (265-420), and thus has a longer history than the city of Beijing. The Stone Flower Cave is a multi-level karst (limestone) cave. The upper two levels, which are open to the public, measure about 1,200 meters in length and 40 meters in depth. The most famous sight is a crystal clear, cauliflower-shaped stalactite. Yunju Temple, 70 kilometers from Beijing, lies at the foot of Baidai Mountain in Fangshan District. First built at the end of the Sui Dynasty (581-618), the temple houses what are said to be bone relics of Sakyamuni, the original Buddha.

Shidu, 100 kilometers from Beijing, refers to the ten fords at Jumahe Canyon.

Tips: An overnight stay at Jietai Temple or Tanzhe Temple accompanied by the temple bells and drums provides a unique experience. Chinese tea ceremonies and vegetarian dishes are available at both temples. For more information, call 6980 2232 for Jietai Temple and 6086 2244 for Tanzhe Temple.

Dule Temple – Huangyaguan Great Wall – Eastern Qing Tombs (独乐寺 – 黄崖关长城 – 清东陵) (Ji County)

Dule Temple, in the town of Ji, 88 kilometers from Beijing, boasts the oldest high-rise wooden structure in China. The 23-meter-high Avalokitesvara Pavilion has survived 28 earthquakes. The pavilion also houses colored sculptures created in the Liao Dynasty and murals painted in the Ming Dynasty.

The Huangyaguan section of Great Wall crosses the mountainous area north of Ji, and is well known for its “Eight-Diagram Street” and historic stone tablets.

Buried in the Eastern Qing Tombs, 110 kilometers from Beijing, are three Qing Dynasty rulers, Kangxi, Qianlong and Cixi, all of whom played key roles in China's history.

Ancient city of Xingcheng – Seaside resort – Chrysanthemum Island (兴城古城 – 海滨浴场 – 菊花岛) (Ji County)

The ancient city of Xingcheng is the site of a desperate battle between the troops of General Yuan Chonghuan of the Ming Dynasty and the forces of Nuerhachi, the founder of the Qing Dynasty. It is now a favored location for shooting historical dramas. The half-moon bay seaside resort in Xingcheng features several dozen sanatoriums and rest homes. Chrysanthemum Island, 50 minutes by boat from Xingcheng, is the biggest island in Bohai Bay, and is named for its profusion of lush chrysanthemum trees.

Tips: Accommodation can be booked at Xingcheng (approximately 200 yuan per person) by calling 0429-5411009.

Bashang Grassland (坝上草原) (Fengning County)

Bashang Grassland, 87 kilometers northwest of the county seat of Fengning, is the closest natural grassland area to Beijing. Located at the junction of the North China Plain and the Inner Mongolian Grassland, Bashang is a popular destination for tourists and photographers. With an average summer temperature much lower than that of Beijing, the grassland is an ideal place to escape the heat. The route along mountain highways offers picturesque views.

Tips: Horse riding is available, so bring a pair

of loose fitting slacks. Baiyin Holiday Resort Hotel, located in the center of the grassland, offers accommodation and a variety of activities. Call 010-65211616 for more information.

Food can be a little expensive, but the roasted whole sheep is a specialty well worth sampling.

Chengde Mountain Resort – Mulan Grassland (承德避暑山庄 – 木兰围场) (Hebei Province)

Chengde Mountain Resort, where the Qing emperors used to escape the summer heat of Beijing, was built between 1703 and 1792. It is a vast complex of palaces and administrative and ceremonial buildings. Temples of various architectural styles and imperial gardens subtly blend into a landscape of lakes, pasture and forests. Mulan Grassland, once the royal hunting ground of the Qing Dynasty, is now a popular holiday spot.

Tips: As well as loose slacks for horse riding, bring some warm clothes, as the temperature can drop dramatically at night.

The guesthouse at Saihanba Forestry Center offers clean, reliable accommodation. Call 0314-702680 for more information.

Nine-Dragon Wall and Huayan Temple in Datong – Yungang Grotto – Wooden Tower in Ying County – Xuankong Temple at Hengshan Mountain (大同九龙壁 – 云冈石窟 – 应县木塔 – 恒山悬空寺) (Shanxi Province)

The Nine-Dragon Wall at Datong is the largest in China and boasts the longest history. Huayan Temple houses Buddha sculptures from the Liao Dynasty (707-1125). The Yungang Grottoes, 16 kilometers west of Datong, were first built in the Northern Wei Dynasty (386-534). Stretching one kilometer from east to west, the 53 grottoes are home to over 51,000 Buddhist statues. The Wooden Tower in Ying County, is the oldest and biggest of its kind in China.

The overhanging rocks and steep drop into the valley below at Xuankong Temple, Hengshan Mountain, makes the temple a real construction wonder. The 40 buildings of the temple are linked by wooden staircases, winding corridors and hanging plank walkways.

Tips: The only downside to taking this scenic route is the many, frequently overloaded, coal trucks that also use the highway.

The Red Flag Hotel, near Datong Railway Station is a convenient and inexpensive three-star hotel. Call 0352-2816306 for bookings.

One of the highlights of a visit to Shanxi Province is the many varieties of noodles made from wheat flour.



Eastern Qing Tombs



Ancient city of Xingcheng



Bashang Grassland



Mulan Grassland



Xuankong Temple